WHOLE PERSON TO WHOLE PERSON PREACHING

IN THE AFRICAN-IMMIGRANT CONTEXT

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As the African adage states, “it takes a village.”

This thesis-project is dedicated to my parents, the late Pa Abu Mansaray and Yamama Kamara-Mansaray, who lovingly raised me in a Christian home and introduced me to the gospel, by word and their exemplary lives,

to my sons: James, Michael, and Matthew,

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ABSTRACT

Preaching in the African-Immigrant context calls for the preacher to implement diagnostical tools to assess the listeners' context and situation to understand their identity. Listeners in this setting are displaced and affected by issues of marginalization. The preacher should use scripture appropriately to pivot listeners' identity. Whole preaching to the African-Immigrant context calls for a globalized accent. The immigrant coming from an isolated village has now become a global citizen. This complex personality requires a multiplex approach to reach the whole person. The preacher should develop a repertoire of homiletical skills to preach effectively to this audience.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTINGS

Whole person preaching or preaching to the whole person in an African-Immigrant setting is a contextual enterprise. Anecdotally, the preacher is like an archaeologist who digs for artifacts, or an anthropologist who lives with a people and culture, observes them and studies them and provides an informed interpretation. In this analogy, the former is thoroughly searching for hidden and missing links, and the latter is providing the transactional and interactional dynamics.

Whole Person Preaching and the African-Immigrant Context

Preaching in most African-Immigrant contexts today has been influenced by the Evangelicals' personal salvation messages; the Pentecostals' Spirit-filled messages and the Charismatics' prosperity messages. All these preaching methodologies are one dimensional. They emphasize one aspect of personhood over the others. Whole preaching is a methodology that addresses the whole person. In whole preaching the listener's personal, spiritual, psychological, cultural economic and political situation are weaved into the sermon.

There are myriads of factors affecting and afflicting a person's life. A whole sermon calls into question all the factors influencing and shaping the person. The Bible addresses the various contexts affecting persons and societies, and preaching to the whole person must demonstrate an understanding of context(s).

The word "context" has a quartet of expressions: "con", "context", "content" and "text." The "con" is the convincing argument and persuasion that comes from close observation and study. The "content" is made up of facts and materials gathered from a situation. The "con-text" is the overall scheme. The "text" is the ultimate interpretation of the scripture.

Preaching becomes inspiring when the listener perceives that the preacher understands the context and text. Preaching in this setting screams aloud for a diagnostic assessment of the peoples and their cultures. The preacher must understand the backgrounds of the people to whom she is preaching. This is usually a monumental task given the huge diversity in peoples' cultures, tribes, languages, rituals, myths, and beliefs in Africa, even within the same village, town, or city, let alone the country.

Furthermore, the preacher must understand the subtleties of cultural shift–with emphasis shifting from generation to generation within the same society. This life interaction between the people, their cultures and outside influences makes the listeners vacillate between cultures, beliefs, and interpretations. The preacher must be careful to harmonize every side like an orchestra conductor.

When African Christians pray, there is heavy emphasis on protections from juju and Witchcraft[1] and other forms of evil they have known while growing up. A preacher thrust into this environment must demonstrate a skillful analysis of listeners' theological, psychological, sociological, and economic challenges. Most importantly, the preacher must present an effective application of scripture to the persons' mind-set and the context of both current and past experiences. The personality and grace of the preacher, her[2] appearance, tone of voice and knowledge of the Bible, current events (especially those affecting immigrants) and biblical reassurances make a huge impact on the congregation.

Effective preaching is contextual. It must paint a vivid picture of the context of the listener and bring to life the message of scripture. A grasp of scripture on one hand and a critical examination of the listener's world on the other would elicit attention. Listeners become engaged in the sermon when they realize that the preacher is interested in them. Preaching gains credibility when the listeners realize that there is a vivid understanding of their background and context.

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1. Juju and Witchcrafts are sometimes used interchangeably. They refer to black magic, spells, sorceries, and evil incantations that are demonic in origin. They are synonymous with 'Voodoo'.

2. I will be interspersing male and female pronouns for preachers because the pastorate in the African-Immigrant church comprises of both genders.

Preaching is never done in a vacuum. It must revolve around a specific location. Mark Allan Powell defines social location as "… complex of factors … with such a distinction can be based on race, gender, age, nationality, economic class, political affiliation and so on."[3] Scripture is addressed to a certain audience in a certain historical-contemporary setting, and preaching is effective when it revolves around a precise context. Any preaching which demonstrates an accurate understanding of situations and background would grip the listeners' attention and move them to action.

The word *"preach"* means to *"proclaim* —preaching is a public proclamation of God's word—entails the Greek concept of *Euangelizomai*, *Katangello* and *Kerysso*—Matthew 3:1; Mark 1:4, and Luke 3:3)"[4] However, "preaching" comes alive when it incorporates the concept of "homily." Both words express the idea of proclamation,[5] but the word "homily" further expresses the liturgical idea of a song. These concepts convey the idea of a communion. Proclamation is done from a preacher's perspective, but the thrust of a song is to reach the whole person: ethos, logos, and pathos.[6] Preaching when skillfully designed and incorporated with musicality, effectively reaches the whole person. Crawford writes: "preaching as an oral event, as sonic experience with musical qualities, is reflecting in my belief that preaching is holiness in timing."[7]

3. Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear?: Bridging the Gap between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 11.

4. Sally A. Brown and Luke A. Powery, *Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2016), 17.

5. "Christian preaching is thus not persuasion, but proclamation, and is based on authority and grace, not on proof." George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric: and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 127.

6. "Rhetoric, according to Aristotle, relies on the interplay of these three elements of ethos, pathos and logos." Iris Stucki and Fritz Sager, "Aristotelian Framing: Logos, Ethos, Pathos and the Use of Evidence in Policy Frame." *Policy Sci* 51 (June 5, 2018): 373-385. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9322-8.

7. Evans E. Crawford, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 17.

The word *whole* is a derivative of the Greek word *holos.* It conveys the idea of sanctity, holiness, health, completeness, celebration, and rest. However, one cannot talk about the word *whole* without referring to the word *holy.* The Greek word for *holy* is *hagios*.[8] *Hagios* gives us the sense of holiness for which we are set apart to God. In the Hebrew, the word *holy* is *kodesh.* "It means to set apart … to remove from common use, subject to special use … to mark as sanctified, consecrated … reserved to and belonging to God."[9]

Holos the root of the English term: whole, conveys the idea of holy and holiness.[10] The concept of holiday originates from the word "holy." The purpose of holiday is celebration, relaxation, contemplation, cessation, and rest. Furthermore, the word *holistic* is a derivative of the word *holy* and it expresses the benefits of health, well-being and completeness. "The adjective 'holy' comes from the Old English word "Halig" and is related to the German word "Heilig," meaning "blessed." There is a relationship between holy and whole, and the religious sense probably developed from keeping believers spiritually whole—and pure."[11]

A closer look at the word "holy" and "whole" shows that they both have different meanings. When one looks at the word "holy" or "holiness," it renders a meaning of being separated unto God. The word "whole" does not convey this meaning. It gives the meaning of completeness. However, one can argue that the outcome of "holy" or "holiness" expresses a notion of completeness. Holy or holiness

8. "*Hagios* is set apart for dedication to the interest or expectations of a deity. Holy – of things, holy, sacred, consecrated." Frederick W. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 391-392.

9. Francis Brown, Edward Robinson, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs and Wilhelm Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 33-52.

10. *Holos* (a primitive adjective and the root of the English term "whole") – properly, wholly, where all the parts are present and working as a whole – i.e., as the total, which is greater than the mere sum of the parts. This factor is especially significant in the metaphorical contexts or those focusing on the spiritual plane.

11. "A place, object, or person who has been blessed can be described as holy, meaning, associated with God." www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/holy.

extends to humanity certain elements of divine characteristics. When man assumes this godly attribute then one can argue that fullness is ascribed. Thereby, restoring to humanity a wholeness that God intended from creation. In this case, the word "whole" is a part of the outcome of being holy. Preaching therefore is geared towards the whole person—to bring him into completeness in Christ. John writes, "Out of his fullness we have all received grace…" (John 1:16).[12]

Whole preaching is the proclamation of the holiness of God. To proclaim the holiness of God means to proclaim the fullness of this character. The task of the preacher is to bring humanity into the holy state of being for which we are created and set apart to God. Whole preaching calls us to imbibe, partake and celebrate the holiness of God. Whole preaching calls the preacher to a miraculous task, and that is to bring God into man and man into God—to unity and "wholeness." Whole preaching addresses the character and holiness of God and brings that into the deficit that humanity has incurred because of sin. Whole preaching is restorative: it points the whole man to the whole plan of God for his existence.

To accomplish this, whole preaching must be transactional. This means that the preacher and the listener exchange their frames of references. It is also interactive–the preacher and the listener collectively commune within the same frame of mind. The preacher through his proclamation reveals truths to the listener; the listener by his silence or response embellishes the preacher's theology and provides her with new insight and understanding. Most importantly, the preacher must be able to deliver the word to the listener's backyard, and make the listener live and dance through the pages of scripture.

Preaching which seeks to reach only one aspect of a person would do injustice to the entire person. Individuals are not fragmented or compartmentalized as they appear to be. For example, a sermon that is exclusively cerebral may not reach the emotional dimension of the listener.

12. All scripture quotations are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs: Biblical, 2011) unless they are otherwise indicated; hereafter referred to as "NIV."

The individual self and the whole are a complete and interrelated unit. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

The Latin word for "person" (*persona*) conveys the idea of a "mask—false face."[13] Its origin stems from medieval actors who put on a disguise to cover up their true self. The goal of whole person preaching is to reach the individual and congregation at various levels. The preacher must be aware of every stratum of person—delving deeper to reach the person behind the mask and even the soul.

In whole person preaching some of the factors I consider as masks are demographic, historical, cultural, psychological, socio-economic, and theological. All these factors shape the listener's personality, but these factors also have the propensity to conceal another dimension of person. To understand the listener, the preacher must first incarnate in their world and skillfully diagnose and assess issues arising from their context before sitting down to prepare a sermon. After a critical analysis, the preacher would be able to understand the context, interpret the culture and exegete the listener. As Paul writes, she would be able to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Subsequently, the preacher would have cultivated a favorable ambience for preaching. David Cunningham refers to this process as "reconstructing the audience."[14]

I am so enamored by preaching because it is the best way to retell theology to the average listener. Unlike the discipline of theology proper, which is geared towards a professional and elite audience, preaching is directed to those who would be saved and the body of Christ, which are composed significantly of laity. Preaching, when prayerfully and purposefully designed, would rightfully

13. Latin *persona* means "human being, personage; a part in a drama, assumed character, originally from a mask, a false face, such as those of wood or clay worn by actors in later Roman Theatre." "Persona," https://www.etymonline.com/word/persona.

14. David S. Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion: In Aid of a Rhetoric of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1990), 74.

become the vehicle to salvation, sanctification of the believer and the glorification of Christ. "Those he called; he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

My idea for this topic came from David Currie's book, *The Big Idea of Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services.* Currie writes, *"All preaching is worship."*[15] Worship is integrally connected with preaching. Both use the word of God and engage the people of God to glorify God. Any preaching that does not glorify God would be relegated as speech. The goal of preaching is to glorify Christ and to invoke the presence of God. A sermon that does not invoke worship is exhausting and carnal. But a sermon which gives to worship is blissful, satisfying, and easy to proclaim. If given the permission, I would like to borrow his definition and replace the word "worship" and use preaching instead.

"Biblical worship (preaching) is raised up when the whole word of God guides the whole person together with the whole people of God into the full presence of the Father in full union with the Son through the full power of the Holy Spirit to further fulfillment of the whole mission of God."[16] This is a wholistic definition of preaching. It considers the terrain of preaching: whole word of God; whole people of God; whole person; whole mission and full power and fulfillment. The definition renders preaching as worship. It fits very well into the scheme of homily: to sing into "full presence of the Father in full union with the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit."[17]

African culture is distinguished by worship and celebration. Africans sing to every occasion in their daily lives: when doing chores and farming; when expressing joy, sadness, and reverence to deity; and when celebrating many cultural events. They sing to their deities. They sing of their struggles and

15. David A. Currie*, The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), 3.

16. Currie, *Big Idea of Biblical Worship,* 13.

17. Currie, *Big Idea of Biblical Worship,* 13.

victories, and color their world with music–sad music like the "Blues" in difficult times and happy music like "Soukous" in joyous times. [18] They are like the Hebrews whose lives were punctuated with Psalms and hymns.

Preaching in the African-Immigrant context must appropriate the idea of worship because this is part of their DNA. Evans Crawford writes: "musicality represents something much deeper."[19]

Africans are inextricably bound by their communality. They place premium on the community's need above that of the individual. Africans would collectively attend to the need of the stranger and deny their own immediate needs. This communal culture is a plea and a plot for survival. It is a plea because their actions indicate that every individual would need the help of another and this plea for survival fosters community. It is a plot because they know that the good seed that was sown would bring dividends in the future. They form and foster community in search and hope of a better future. It is their "spiritual insurance policy." By this I mean, that their good deeds will be rewarded in the future—sometimes in their lifetime or their posterity.

Africans searching for the sense of identity and threatened by other social forces form community. The plot for survival would sustain the group and form solidarity or may result in tribalism and sectionalism—a sin that they contend with. However, to understand the African is to understand his culture, and the culture is a window to the African soul. Culture then (especially its communal underpinning) provides an outlet to discovering the person. John Mbiti in his book, *African Religion and Philosophy* writes,

> …to be human [African] is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festival of the community. A person cannot detach himself … for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships

18. Soukous is a genre of dance music derived from Congolese music but also has elements of "Soca" Trinidad carnival beat.

19. Crawford, *Hum,* 16.

> and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be cut out of the whole picture.[20]

One of the fundamental tasks of preaching is understanding and pronouncing the symbiotic relationship between culture and theology. Preaching requires an intentional assessment of culture and a rigorous and diligent theological interpretation in this symbiotic relationship. Neither can exist without the other. A cultural assessment lacks potency if void of biblical and theological engagement, and a theological exercise is irrelevant if not designed within specific social location.

Preaching in the African-Immigrant context places the preacher in the center of culture. Being placed in the center of culture does not make preaching simplistic. Culture has many distinctions. The center of culture may also mean being placed in the turbulence of culture. Culture, which is the fertile land and place to begin to understand a person, may come with many complexities, confusions, and distortions.

Culture is very fluid, and every culture has variants of subcultures. These subcultures have the propensity to alter prevailing assumptions. Because culture fluctuates, assessment becomes very problematic. The task of the preacher is to wrestle with culture and live and thrive in the liberty (Galatians 5:1) that Christ provides.

Preaching in the African-Immigrant setting deals with a trilogy of cultures. There is the African culture, the immigrant/diaspora culture and the culture of the host nation, that I will call old-new and imposed cultural heritage. The African culture is the place of originality: where identity is first formed. This identity formation is a complex evolution of nature (the native environment and nurture). That is to say the total person's experiences with history, food, myths, folktales, fears, joys, community expectations in the cultural setting.

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20. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1969), 2.

By the time, the African-Immigrant arrives in the diaspora, his identity is already formed in beliefs, biases, personalities, expectations, and consciousness. The diaspora is the place of new beginnings and of ambiguities with constant changing dynamics of loss and lament, gain and joy, frustrations and happiness, despair and hope. The foreign culture is perceived by the African-Immigrant as the place of survival: a place to shed past identities and to accommodate a foreign orientation.

However, this place of survival has different meanings for different people based on where, how, and why they immigrated. Immigrants' identities are altered and formed during the migration epoch, and sometimes tend to come into conflict with homeland upbringing. The immigrant who left his homeland is now displaced between cultures and experiences. This intricate setting places the preacher in a conundrum.

The African-Immigrant preacher ministers in a very complex setting. The listener in this demographic is a product of litany of forces: tradition, colonization, political and economic displacements, ambitions, hopes and aspirations. In the diaspora, he is lured into a complex culture that may prove very difficult for him to assimilate into. Initially, he may lack the sophistication and skills to engage this new culture.

Secondly, he knows that he will bid farewell to traditions and culture he has known all his life. He will wrestle with and contend with this dilemma. A preacher called into this setting must consider this reality. She must navigate this cultural cycle, interact amongst all the variances of culture and lead her listener to a new placement. "The preacher's main challenge is to be able to interact with multiple worlds, understanding and interpreting these worlds, theologically, biblically and culturally."[21]

This new identity that is forming and deforming in the immigrant experience may create a challenge for preaching; but it may also provide the preacher with ample materials that would enrich

21. Woosung Calvin Choi, *Preaching to Multiethnic Congregation: Positive Marginality as a Homiletical Paradigm* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 40.

her understanding of the listener, improve her sermonic preparation, and enhance her delivery. "A journey is more than just the baggage we bring.… It also includes some sort of route. For those who journey through displacement … there has been *hardships* along the way. … the long trek from a former setting up to now could well be filled with character-shaping and character-distorting experiences."[22]

Unbeknownst to the preacher are the multiples of personalities that can erupt in this pluralistic environment. This sets up a dilemma for both preacher and listener. When the preacher is entrenched in her African perspective and formulates sermons to meet the needs of her listeners, she may be surprised to discover a listener who has shifted alliance to another culture. The preacher who orients herself in the immigrant experience may suddenly find herself on the opposite end of the spectrum of the listener who now primarily identifies with the Pledge of Allegiance and "the republic for which it stands."

This creates a frustration for both pulpit and pew. The listener becoming disenchanted with preaching, and the preacher is increasingly frustrated with a congregation that she thinks is backslidden. It is incumbent upon the preacher to understand this context and the cultural frame from which to proclaim the gospel because "preaching is always, by its very nature, in dialogue with culture."[23]

It is not an understatement to say that "preaching is in crisis" in the African-Immigrant context. The listener coming to church with litany of problems finds the preaching irrelevant. Most pastors spilling their hearts out trying to reach their congregations find their messages ricocheting as if preaching to a blank wall.

The pastor becomes nostalgic, thinking of how her fiery sermons were received in the homeland, increasingly becomes exasperated because here it does not have the same reception. The

22. James L. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 96.

23. O. Wesley Allen and David Buttrick, *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 21.

listener on the other hand has swung the pendulum to a different facet of his life and now begins to realize that the preacher does not understand me. Pastors who are accustomed to preaching lengthy sermons, now bear the rebuke of the congregation that they are wasting their time. To her dismay, her listeners "have lost their first love" (Revelation 2:4).

African-Immigrant Preaching: The Perspective of Interviews and the Local Setting

This study is first based on observation and assessment at the New-Life United African church, where I serve as Pastor. New-Life United African church is a non-denominational Church. Ninety percent of the congregation is made up of first-generation Africans mainly from Sierra Leone. The remaining ten percent is comprised of Liberians, Ghanaians, Tanzanians, African-Americans, and second-generation children of immigrants.

Sierra Leone is known for its early reception of Christianity. The capital city, Freetown, was the home of returned free slaves from North America (Nova Scotia) in 1787. In 1505, Portuguese missionary endeavors planted the first Catholic Church in Sierra Leone. In 1804, the overseas work of the Church Missionary Society began in Sierra Leone. [24] In 1864, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was ordained as the first Anglican Bishop of Africa. [25] Though he was of Yoruba decent (from Nigeria), Crowther was stationed in Sierra Leone where he helped train other ministers of the gospel.

Sierra Leone, like the rest of West African countries had its incursion of Islam but the church continued to flourish. Africans who traveled abroad joined the church of the host nation, but they still longed for indigenous faith communities. Many Africans feel lost and ostracized in some of these

24. https://churchmissionsociety.org/about/our-history/.

25. http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/c-d/crowther-samuel-adjai-or-ajayi-c-1807-1891/.

churches. They needed faith communities where they could be understood and free to express themselves. New Life United African Church provided the safe space where they could be understood.

The church is made up of the major tribes of Sierra Leone (Mendes, Temnes, Limbas, Creoles and Mandingos). The other Africans and African-American worshippers also bring along the wealth of their culture, share their experiences and inculcate their indigenous character. The members come from different denominations: Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Pentecostals and converts from Islam. The church continues to flourish with this diversity.

Seventy percent of the congregation are naturalized American citizens and well-educated. Though sometimes economically disadvantaged, they work hard because they have families to support on both sides of the Atlantic. Some are employed in the medical field, others in the mental health industry and a handful own their businesses. With such hectic schedules, they long for a church that understands and celebrates them.

A focus group of ten persons was formed–six men and four women. (They were members of the New Life United African Church.) They were between the age of thirty-eight and sixty-three. Eight of them were married including two couples and two were single. Two have master's degrees, five with associate or bachelor's degree and three completed secondary education. The three with secondary school education also have specialized training in their respective careers. The group met after church and discussed the following topics:

1. Preaching in the African-Immigrant context. The group examined the various conditions leading to migration. Some of the immigrants arrived as legal immigrants. Within this category, some spouses, children or relatives of naturalized citizens are permanent residents. Others were admitted into the US as refugees. Some of these refugees were granted temporary status or asylum because of the ten years of civil war in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Some obtained student visas and a few took the risk to migrate on their own. Some had to

struggle through the system to obtain legal status and sometimes it takes years, if not decades for them to become permanent residents. The group noted that the needs of these various groups differ from each other, and the preacher must not assume a monolithic mindset.[26]

2. Understanding the listeners in an African-Immigrant context. One of the participants noted that "preaching must be done as relating to the congregation and the preacher must be able to convince the congregation of the truths in scripture."[27] A married couple noted that because the educational level of the congregation varies, the sermon must be presented in simple English so that everyone could understand.[28]

3. Perspectives on listener-friendly sermons. The discussion on listener-friendly sermons received a mixed review. Most of the participants did appear to entertain a sermon that is listener-friendly. One of the participants said that the preacher "must not sugar-coat the scripture."[29] Another noted that preaching "is to tell the truth the way it is."[30] While they noted that the preacher must not appear rude to the congregation, they agreed that preaching is to reveal the truth about scripture and that the word of God is offensive. One of the participants opened his Bible and quoted from scripture: "word of God is like a hammer" (Jeremiah 23:29); "the word of God … a two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).[31]

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26. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

27. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019. Contribution from one of the participants.

28. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019. Contribution from a couple (husband and wife).

29. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

30. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

31. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019. As referenced by one of the participants.

4. Mistakes to avoid in preaching in an African-Immigrant context. The group caution preachers about preaching long sermons. They noted that some of the members work two jobs and others are going to work immediately after church. They counselled pastors to be themselves and refrain from copying other preachers.

5. Recommendations on how to design sermons in African-Immigrant context. Some of the recommendations were: avoiding intensive theological matters and focusing on the needs of the congregation; avoiding deep intellectual or philosophical sermons and for preachers to be energetic and passionate about the Bible, and the listeners. All the participant agreed that prayer and study of the word is the most important and godly way to design a sermon.

The group was unanimous in its condemnation of manuscript preaching.[32] They agreed that preaching from a manuscript distracts both preacher and listener. One of the participants noted that when a preacher uses a manuscript some of the focus is on the script and the listener is not given preference. The manuscript, they agreed, imprisons the personality of the preacher and it displaces the importance given to scripture. Whole preaching to African-Immigrant congregation must engage every aspect of listener, preacher, and scripture.

The discussion of the focus group, interviews, as well as other participants, were recorded with their permission. It was agreed that the privacy of the participants was of utmost importance and the recordings will be discarded after the completion of this project. However, essential dialogues will be outlined and discussed in Chapter Four.[33] The work of the focus group was strategic. It analyzed practices that were ineffective and recommended that preachers should focus on the listeners' needs and engage them in the economic and political issues affecting their world.

32. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

33. Some of the important outline of the interviews will be discussed in Chapter Four under the title "Project Design."

In addition, I interviewed twelve pastors. Four of them were originally from Nigeria, four from Sierra Leone, one from Ghana, one from the Republic of Congo, one from Liberia and one from Haiti. (Although Haiti is not in Africa; many Haitians claimed Africa as their place of origin. This participant claimed his origin from Benin, in West Africa.) I interviewed five women pastors and seven men. Two of them were couples that are co-pastoring, three are associate pastors and nine are head/senior pastors. Three of the participants have doctorate degrees (not theological degrees), three have master's degrees (non-theological–in other fields of studies), three have Master of Divinity degrees, one has a Bachelor of Science degree (Nursing) and a year of Bible College training, one has some form of theological education, and one was trained by her pastor. All the participants entered the ministry as a second career and all of them were bi-vocational preachers.

Ten of the interviews were in person and two were done via telephone. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants.[34] Furthermore, I listened to some of my participants' sermons on Facebook, What's Up app, and on YouTube. I invited a couple of preachers to minister in my church, and the focus group drew inferences from some of those sermons. I was also invited to listen to two other preachers in their churches.

To buttress my research, I interviewed ten listeners (laity). The listeners are vital to this research because they are the people for whom preachers design their sermons. [35] So, their feedback is pivotal to this research. I interviewed two listeners from Ghana, one from Cameroon, one from Nigeria and six from Sierra Leone. They all reside in the US. There were seven women and three men. Seven of them were married, including one who was a couple. Three of the participants were single, including two single parents. They were between the ages of nineteen and fifty-three. Three of them had master's

34. Essential information will be presented in Chapter Four, "Project Design." The project will not display the names of participants to protect their privacy.

35. For details see Chapter Four, "Project Design."

degrees, five had associate or bachelor's degree, one was a college student and one had secondary school education.

The collective responses of the focus group and the interviews with pastors and laity identified grievances with preaching in the African-Immigrant context that calls for our immediate discussion. From the interviews, we were able to delineate some of the problems related to whole person preaching in the African-Immigrant context. As discussed earlier in this study, culture is fluid and most of the issues emanating from culture comes as mixed blessings and warrants our discussion.

In *Christianity Today*, a March 5, 2015 article by Krish Kandiah says,

> The Church has seen dramatic and explosive growth in Asia, Africa and South America. The growth of the African Church in particular is jaw-dropping. In 1900 there were fewer than 9 million Christians in Africa. Now there are more than 541 million. In the last 15 years alone, the Church in Africa has seen a 51 per cent increase, which works out on average at around 33,000 people either becoming Christians or being born into Christian families each day in Africa.[36]

He reported the astronomical growth of the church in Africa. The growth of the church in Africa, as well as in the diaspora, comes with mixed blessings. The Pentecostal Church in Africa appears to have an anti-academic approach to ministry. The majority of Africa's growing churches are Pentecostal or Charismatic. In the Pentecostal movement there appears to be an undercurrent of an anti-establishment, anti-institution, anti-intellectual, anti-academic and anti-authoritarian culture.

As the church grows in Africa, so does its ministers. The prevailing notion of Pentecostalism is the rejection of every superstructure and a total reliance on the Spirit. In addition, Africans' belief in the "spirit" (holy and/or evil), supersedes the rest of the human population. The belief in spirits is embedded in their upbringings, myths, folktales, and culture. The fear of demonic powers and evil does move African**s** to rely on the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the abuse of political and religious authority by African leaders would warrant a dependence on a higher authority and that authority resides in the

36. Krish Kandiah, "The Church Is Growing, and Here Are the Figures that Prove It," *Christianity Today*, March 5, 2015, https://www.christianitytoday.com/article/a-growing.

power of the Holy Spirit. This penchant for the Holy Spirit comes from Luke's historical records and precedents from the Acts of the Apostle: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us …" (Acts 15:28).

Jacob Jervell commented,

> The spirit is an impersonal active force, God's creative and prophetic presence in the history of the people. No wonder that Luke, more than any other New Testament author, depicts the spirit as it appears in the Old Testament: the spirit inspires prophecy … raises up leaders … creates heaven and men … judges and purifies … and, in all this and above all, God pours out his spirit…[37]

The Apostles in the book of Acts relied on the Holy Spirit Baptism, Holy Spirit prompting and Holy Spirit leading. The Holy Spirit is credited with the dynamism affecting the growth of African Christianity. Some African Christians and ministers have relied on the Holy Spirit and reject formal theological educational training. Juxtaposed to this is the vexing problem of the malaise of the educational institutions in Africa and the alarming rate of illiteracy. This is beyond the reach of this study.

As the church grows in Africa and the diaspora, some of her followers lament the lack of adequate training of its ministers. Today, in Africa and as well as the diaspora, an individual might anoint herself as a preacher and reject any formal training. There may be a positive and a negative effect to this. The minister may have the calling, but she may not necessarily possess the ability to preach effectively to the listeners in their specific social location.

African Pentecostals are wary of theological education because of the secularism that may creep into their training. Some have witnessed how theological education has seemed to compromise and corrupt their faith. An alarming number of them have lamented the intrusion of psychology into scripture and theology. Because of these factors, and more, they continue their deep reliance on the leading of the Holy Spirit. Despite all of these, the church continues to grow. While it provides the

37. Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44.

church with personnel, it remains to be seen if the church has well-trained preachers who are equipped to engage a changing culture and to preach the whole gospel to the whole person.

African-Immigrant pastors display a different form of anti-academic and anti-intellectualism. Ninety percent of the pastors I interviewed have academic degrees. About sixty percent have graduate degrees. In their ministries however, they outrightly denounce all academic or intellectual approaches and practices. Because Pentecostalism thrives in some form of mysticism and spontaneity, it provides the impetus for pastors to swing the pendulum and assume an anti-intellectual approach. Furthermore, most Pentecostal pastors work under the premise that they are led, prompted and accountable only to the Holy Spirit.

"Pentecostalism has built within it some elements that make its adherents more susceptible to anti-intellectualism."[38] "Pentecostal anti-intellectuality rests on the observation that Pentecostal spirituality arises from the affection rather than intellectual ability; it is dominated by imagination rather than reason; it operates on the level of oral discourse rather than written discourse."[39] "The implication … that the Spirit [is] driven out of the church and replaced with reliance on intellectual and speculative thinking leading to … theories, and criticism that disempower the gospel and paralyzed believers."[40]

African-Immigrant listeners, who embody a tripartite culture (by this I mean having three cultural dimensions: African, Immigrant and culture of the host nation) are concerned about the lack of untrained preachers—especially those who do not seem to understand them. These listeners are frustrated and constantly shopping for a preacher who understands their social location. Some have

38. *"Anti-Intellectualism: A Problem for the Church?*," https://thinkchristian.reframemedia.com /anti-intellectualism-a-problem-for-the-church.

39. M. Nell, "Rather Spirit-filled than Learned! Pentecostalism's Tradition of Anti-Intellectualism and Pentecostal Scholarship," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no.1 (January 2016): 1-9.

40. D. Tarr, "Transcendence, Immanence, and the Emerging Pentecostal Academy," in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies,* eds. W. Ma and Menzies (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 195-222.

coined the term “church prostitution,” which means “going from church to church.” The listeners who engage in this odyssey go to the church of the host nation but remain unsatisfied because part of their “otherness” is not addressed. They long for a church that can preach to their wholeness as African-Immigrants. They are unique individuals who are living in a mixture of culture, and they long to thrive in their plurality and celebrate their wholeness.

One can make a cogent argument that the problems arising from training, and the lack thereof, is linked to Pentecostal culture in general. Pentecostalism is a disruption of religious culture. It seeks to upend the status quo and to ravel previous norms. Converts to Pentecostalism have lived in a cultural upheaval, where their lives have been ruptured[41] by social and political forces such as: colonialism, constant political uncertainties, and economic oppressions of all sorts. Those who gravitate towards Pentecostalism live in disruptions and uncertainties. This begins to explain the anti-authoritarian and anti-intellectual temperament.

In addition to these ambiguities, African-Immigrants also live within their own “cultural prisms.”[42] They must embrace their tradition (which also is a breeding ground for contradictions), and that of the foreign culture (which also has enormous complications). Their culture on one hand embraces authority, but at the same time is suspicious of authority. The contempt for authority comes from dubious political and economic structures that have disrupted their lives. One of the pastors interviewed complained of this ambiguity and derision that he suffers. He commented that at times they

41. In the article “Anthropology of Religion,” Joel Robbins writes, “Pentecostal’s stress on the rapture across three dimensions—the personal, the cultural, and the eschatological … Pentecostal culture … as seen to be marked by tension.” Joel Robbins, “Anthropology of Religion,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories & Methods,* ed. Allan Anderson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 161.

42. By “cultural prisms” I mean the entrapments of culture which result in distortions and contradictions.

would venerate him, but at other times they would lampoon him by saying: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 10:12).[43]

Alongside the problem with authority is another problem I would like to consider as "totemic issues." These issues in the African setting combine magic, some form of sorcery, Voodoo and Witchcraft—a confusion of "religion, magic and social aspects … undistinguished … [as religious, traditional and demonic practices]."[44]

African traditional spiritual and religious practices such as animism, occultisms, Voodoo, and Islam have surreptitiously seeped into African Christianity. John Mbiti argues that Animism, Islam, and Christianity are deeply entrenched in Africa.[45] In Pentecostal circles, Islamic and animistic verbiages have found residence in their theology. One of the participants I interviewed was very upset with fusion of these traditions into her faith.[46] This makes it easy for African Christianity to succumb to syncretism.[47] One can argue that Pentecostalism has facilitated a culture in which these voices have found a foothold in their faith. Those who come to the faith have not totally shed past identities, and the voices of the past continue to linger. These contradictory voices transported into the faith becomes "another gospel" — "an anathema" (KJV). The NIV translates it to mean "a curse" (Galatians 1:8).

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43. Interview with a pastor from New Jersey, February 14, 2020 (all interviews were confidential, and the names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement).

44. Gerard Lucas, *The Vicissitudes of Totemism: One Hundred Years After Totem and Taboos* (London: Karma Books, 2015), 4.

45. Mbiti, *African Religions,* 223 – 224.

46. Interview with a pastoral couple, December 7, 2019.

47. "The idea that religion, culture and ethnicity are pure entities, which may become mixed when in encounter, just as when mixed organisms crossbreed, is an idea that relates to the traditional definition of syncretism … the mixture of different religious origins may again lead to the parentage of new, but impure, hybrid forms, instead of a stable reproduction of pure religious or cultural traditions." Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, eds., *Syncretism in Religion: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

Borrowing a concept from what David Cunningham refers to as "dual contextuality," African-Immigrants are under the barrage of their Christian faith and African heritage, and between identity and the reality of life in the diaspora.[48] They must hold on to African traditions and at the same time be true to their Christian values. Those who felt the economic pressure to migrate to the New World are now under pressure to live and adjust in their new environment.

The pressure to maintain their traditions and at the same time adjust to their new environment has lingering effects. In their peregrination, certain foreign elements have crept up in their faith which have produced some effects of syncretism. Further along in the diaspora, these same elements have caused them to imbibe doctrines and practices that are inimical to Christianity. These creative efforts, together with a survival mentality have produced a kind of preaching that is unorthodox in its Christian practice.

Yvonne P. Chireau in her book, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition,* writes,

> African spiritual systems can be transposed into three main categories: religion, magic and witchcraft. These categories reflect the liturgical or practical emphasis of human-other worldly interactions as coercive or propitious practices that are communal, individual, socially beneficial, or antisocial. But typological categories can obscure the fact that indigenous African religions are not compartmentalized. Many African people of the past, as now, drew few distinctions between the substance of their beliefs and the other aspects of the world in which they participated. A spiritual reality governed human life, within the belief systems that were not elaborated as philosophical or speculative knowledge but rather enfolded ways of being and living.[49]

African-Immigrants who find themselves economically disadvantaged developed a survival mentality against poverty. Many who live in oppression and poverty have learned to cope through prayer and the miraculous provision of God. This is especially pronounced among Africans, though it is

48. Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion,* 116.

49. Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 38.

human nature since creation to seek miracles to reinforce the beliefs in deities. From Genesis to Revelation, humans have always sought miracles from God, through his prophets and through Jesus. African-Immigrants today are searching for places and pastors who will deliver miracles. As the pressure mounts on pastors to appease the insatiable need of their listeners, they could abandon the preaching of the whole word of God to the whole people of God, and wholly concentrate on their manipulative schemes, promising miracles.[50] In so doing, they fail to realize that the whole preaching of the word is miraculous. "He sent his word and healed them" (Psalm 107:20).

Equally so, many preachers would also mimic the work of African Juju priests and or Muslim Marabouts in prophetic pronouncements for individuals, groups, and societies.[51] As the desire of the listener burns for foretelling, many preachers abdicate the preaching of the word for personal prophecies. The African-Immigrant religious marketplace today is crying for the prophetic (personal prophecies). Most listeners are demanding, as in the request of Rachel (Genesis 30:1, "Give me children, or I'll die!"), "give me prophecy or I'll die."

The immigrant who left his homeland finds himself in an ongoing migration, moving from church to church in search of personal prophecy. To satisfy this need, the listener wants the preacher to abandon preaching in favor of prophecy. The kind of prophecy they desire is the one which tells them exactly what the Voodoo priest would pronounce. This forces the preacher into "scheming prophecies" for them. [52]

50. Interview with pastoral couple, December 13, 2019, in which the couple lamented "over emphasis on instant miracles is corrupting preaching today."

51. Muslim marabouts are Muslim religious teachers. Sometimes marabout practices are a mixture of Islamic practices, animism, and traditional religious practices.

52. "Scheming prophecy." Interview with a pastor from Texas, February 14, 2019. The pastor said, "most preaching is about scheming personal prophecy, but real prophecy is what the Bible says not the things people are going to get."

The listeners appear not to have the penchant for the whole word of God preached because this need for prophecy becomes overwhelming.[53] They want to hear prophecy that tells them that they will be successful, and they prefer voices that echo to them that they will quickly climb the ladder of success and soar above their counterparts. As a result, the preacher is forced into marketing pronouncements of favors and/or fears on the listeners. Everyone coming to church seeks "what is mine." The effect is that preaching is sliced into a half which does not fit the whole. In the place of biblical and theological balanced preaching is a motivational or marketing ploy.

This rapid culture of preferential prophecy gave birth to a new form of simonizing:[54] "Simony is the clerical abuse of the Latin Church, such as buying (indulgence) of ecclesiastical office."[55] As the audience demands prophecy, both listeners and prophet have devised a scheme to pay for it: credence to the Pentecostal/charismatic culture, which makes it easier for what I term as "prophetic-monetizing culture." The listener who keeps demanding prophecy is met by the prophetic "sow your seeds" culture. Thanks to Oral Roberts who promulgated the "seed faith movement."[56] This seed faith movement has blossomed into a grand marketing and getting their share of the listener's wealth.

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53. Preaching essentially is prophecy, but prophecy about what the word of God declares. Because the New Testament uses prophecy in a positive way, there is a tendency for biblical prophecy to be replaced with personal prophecy.

54. The term "Simonizing" is from the word "Simony." Its origin is from Acts 8:18-24. "Sale of supernatural favors for temporal advantage… the intended or real exchange of a supernatural good, or a natural good annexed thereto, for something temporal…" N.A. Weber, "A History of Simony in the Christian Church: From the Beginning to the Death of Charlemagne (814)" (Doctoral diss., The Catholic University of America, Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1909), 2–4.

55. David Bentley Hart. *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of the 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* (London: Quercus, 2007), 134.

56. "In 1970's TV Evangelist … Oral Roberts pioneered a principle he called 'seed faith.' It uses the familiar concept of planting (sowing) and harvesting (reaping), coupled with misapplied and misinterpreted scriptures, in order to encourage financial support toward a particular Christian ministry (in this case, his own)." "Seedfaith," https://www.biblestudy.org/beginnner/definition-of-christian-terms/seed-faith.html.

Jack Zavada in Learn Religions writes, "TV Evangelist Oral Roberts … promoted 'seed faith.' 'Have a need? Plant a seed.'" Jack Zavada, "Word of Faith Movement History: Brief History of the Word of Faith Movement," Learn Religions, updated on December 10, 2018, https://www.learnreligions.com/word-of-faith-movement-history-700136. The seeds were cash donations to Robert's organization.

While there may be merit to "Seed Faith Movement," it has become an aberration because of its misuse and abuse. When most preachers commenced their preaching, they quickly distanced themselves from preaching the whole word and devised monetizing schemes.[57]

The African-Immigrant church is not monolithic; it is a mixture of cultures and has a diversity that cannot be easily understood. At its inception, it appears to have a cohesiveness and uniformity, but it does not envision a complex and shifting culture. The church is founded on the premise of addressing immigrants' communal needs, but it may not be totally vested in the members' individual needs. The African adage states: "It does not see the trees from the forest."

The church is a diversity of tribes, subcultures, classes, and denominations. This cultural diversity poses a challenge for the preacher. Every voice is clamoring for preferential treatment. In trying to reach the mass, the individual is neglected, and this creates a polarizing situation. Matthew D. Kim commented: "for many ethnic minorities, the recurrence of denigration and rejection based on affiliation with one's ethnic group conjures up the innate questions of self-worth."[58]

Furthermore, the membership of the African-Immigrant church is not formed on denominational alliance. The church is a compendium of several denominations and tribes. There are about three thousand tribes in Africa. In Sierra Leone, there are about eight to twelves major tribes. Each tribe has its different subgroups. Each entity strategically imposes certain expectations on the preacher, and with denominational, sectarian, and tribal expectation, loyalty to the word is replaced with partisan doctrines. "Denominational ties and identity do not die hard … to have [a] myopic tunnel

"Roberts is the inventor of seed faith but his disciples have taken it to places he never imagined." "The Seed of Faith that Made Big Money: The Story and Legacy of Oral Roberts," last modified 2009, Letusreason.org/Popteach47.htm.

57. Interview with a husband-and-wife co-pastor team from Congo/Haiti, October 29, 2019, in which the pastor said, "Real preaching or prophecy is the Spirit speaking through my spirit to your spirit. But today this is lacking, and some preachers just call for money, money and money."

58. Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 104.

vision as a preacher can lead to divisions even in a denominational setting where we believe everyone thinks like us."[59]

We have discussed the "African-ness" of the church. Our discussions have revolved around the African traditions and culture. We have deliberated upon contemporary issues facing the growth of the church. However, the "elephant in the room" is immigration.

The immigration act of 1965 which allows other nations entrance into the United States is diametrically opposed to the present immigration landscape. From the Obama administration to the present Trump administration, immigration has become a nightmare for the African-Immigrant church. An August 29, 2016, ABC News by Serena Marshall reported that "Obama has Deported More People Than Any Other President Trump May be getting closer to the Obama's recent policy."[60] African-Immigrant churches are wary of immigration, and pastors are "keeping their ears" to the ground with the upsurge of deportation. The members are equally concerned and worried.

One of my participants in the focus group complained vehemently about the absence of the prophetic African-Immigrant voice.[61] Whole preaching, he contends is to proclaim the word into every sector of society: political, economic, and social. However, African-Immigrants have found themselves scared and voiceless. As marginalized and minorities they cannot match the tenor of voices coming from Washington. Nonetheless, the power of God's word is the courage of the prophetic voice. Whole person preaching requires a proclamation that is fearless and cuts across all boundaries of society.

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59. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 92.

60. Serena Marshall, "Obama has Deported More People Than Any Other President," August 29, 2016, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obamas-deportation-policynumbers/story?id=41715661.

61. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019. One participant said, "African-Immigrant pastors must engage in this debate. They should not fear deportation. They should speak and preach on this subject because this affects peoples' lives. These are subjects they should speak about because it is also the Bible."

Furthermore, African-Immigrant pastors are also in the struggle for survival in this political and immigration maelstrom. Laity, as well as pastors are in this constant struggle of the "survival of the fittest." An alarming number of pastors are not full-time employees of their churches. Some of them work multiple jobs to take care of their immediate family at home and extended families abroad. The greater portion of the pastors' time and energy is spent on their secular jobs. "One of the greatest areas of frustration in the life of a pastor is often the unrealistic expectations that churches place upon them. This is also the primary sources of conflict and disappointment, straining their relationship and undermining their ability."[62]

An over-worked pastor is ill-prepared to preach a whole message. In empathizing with bi-vocational preachers, Ray Gilder writes, "A bivocational [sic] pastor finds himself performing like the man in the circus who sees how many plates he can keep spinning at the same time. Life would be wonderfully simple if we could do just one thing at a time."[63] In some of the churches, pastors improvise a preaching methodology of congregational Bible reading. Pastors use a lot of scriptures and call on the listeners to read these scriptures throughout the service. The exciting thing about this is that it has the congregation engaged. Nonetheless, one of the listeners I interviewed called this "a glorified Sunday School."[64]

Some of the listeners are fully aware that the preacher is not totally vested in preaching the whole word. They are aware that the preacher is using a substitute and alternative method to compensate for wholistic preaching. This leaves them empty and thirsty for the whole preaching of the word. In some cases, there is a mass exodus to African-American churches where the preachers are full-

62. Warren Seiber, "The Calling of a Part-Time Pastor: Developing a Guidebook for Small Church Leaders in the Reformed Church of America" (DMin thesis-diss., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2016).

63. Ray Gilder, *Uniquely Bivocational: Understanding the Life of a Pastor Who Has a Second Job* (Forest VA: Salt and Light Publishing, 2013), 60.

64. Interview with an assistant pastor from Nigeria, October 9, 2019.

time employees and have a pedigree of effective and dynamic preaching. Those who leave also find ways of attachment so that some form of their "otherness" can be ministered to. Those who stay still live in a vacuum because the whole gospel which addresses their social location appears to be missing.

The African-Immigrant church is set up like a family structure. The members look to the church for support in every aspect of their lives. This creates an enormous challenge and expectation for the pastors. The greater portion of the pastor's work is spent on pastoral counseling and settling disputes and the rigorous preparation of preaching is neglected.

Some of the pastors interviewed said that they prepare their sermon the day before or when they arrive in church. Others have spiritualized this by saying that they wait for what the Spirit would say to them on their way to church.[65] While some preachers have been fortunate to preach dynamic extemporaneous sermons given to them by the unction of the Spirit on Sunday morning, others have produced substandard and ill-prepared sermons.

In all of this, the listeners' spiritual lives are at stake. Rightly, some of the listeners recognized that some of these preachers are playing Russian Roulette with their spiritual lives. This leaves the listeners spiritually famished, malnourished and neglected. Consequently, one can argue that we have a situation where there is famine for the word of God, as in Amos' prophetic cry: "'the days are coming,' declares the Sovereign Lord, 'when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine for food or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord'" (Amos 8:11).

Whole preaching entails the "whole person," the "whole counsel of God" and whole investment of the preacher. A preacher who is tired and over-worked may not be able to preach the whole word of God. Ironically, a church formed to preach the word, creates a famine for the word of God.

This study is not designed to delineate all the problems impeding effective preaching of the whole word to the whole person in the African-Immigrant context.

65. Interview with a Liberian pastor, December 2, 2019.

However, one of the major concerns of the participants in this study was the problem of immorality in the church and the sexual ethics of pastors. Immorality, they complained, damages the credibility of the preacher, and taints the authenticity of the message. This issue raised the loudest protest.

One of the participants said that there is a "sinful pattern amongst some of these so-called preachers. They divorce their wives after these women have helped them build successful ministries and go marry a light-skin and skinny woman who are made for television."[66] The sins of these preachers, they say, are killing the message and the messenger. Their contempt against preachers is justified. Preachers who are called to proclaim the gospel should recant all duplicitous character and uphold the integrity of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes: "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1).

I have attempted to provide a limited grievance from my participants. However, the issues we have covered overlapped with some of the other complaints that are presented in this study. As grievous as some issues are, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Our attempt to deliberate upon these issues has given a concise diagnostic framework with which we will be able to provide the fitting panacea for preaching the whole word to whole person in an African-Immigrant setting.

The preaching of the gospel is too sacred a task and profound a miracle to be misused, abused, and neglected. Preaching has been so misunderstood and abused because the gift and calling have departed from some as the "[Spirit] the departed Samson" (Judges 16:20 KJV). When the preaching of the gospel is imprisoned in one entity and does not take a wholeness, it does injustice to the gospel. This injustice results in a form of "spiritual malnourishment" of the listeners. Because the whole person is not skillfully fed the whole word of God. The gospel is too big to be limited to an entity. It is designed to address the complex nature of man. It is word that speaks to every dimension of humanity. When the

66. Interview with a husband-and-wife co-pastor team from Congo/Haiti, October 20, 2019.

gospel assumes a wholeness then it becomes effective and functions the way God intended it to be. The word is based on the promise that "it will not return … empty" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Bible is given to preachers so that it can be proclaimed as the whole word of God. It must incorporate every dimension of life. Without the whole word, some aspects of life and living are neglected. The Bible is the living word and must breathe life into every situation. It is this word of God that transforms, cleanses, sanctifies, and changes both those who proclaim it and those who hear it. Paul knowing too well the importance of the preacher declared: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14-15).

Whole preaching requires a careful approach; a diligent and calculated assessment; a fully and functional listening discipline (listening to God, the word, people, nature, the world, and events happening around them). This appears to be a herculean task for some to invest into.

Others have turned to alternate methods to replace or replicate whole preaching. In some circles whole preaching has been replaced with praise and worship. Certainly, praise and worship have their place in the church, but the scripture is written to be proclaimed wholly by the person sent by God. In other circles, prayer has taken the place of preaching. Those who have appropriated prayer appears to adopt performance utterance or "speech act".[67] This means that prayer produces the effect of their requests and performance. This is especially true in most African-Immigrant settings who see prayer as their means of expression and method of achieving their desires. Those who have gone beyond prayer have replaced whole preaching with prophecy. A kind of prophecy that promises that good things will happen to them.

67. "The speech act theory was introduced by Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin… It considers the degree to which utterances are said to perform locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and/or perlocutionary acts." https://www.thoughtco.com/speech-act-theory-1691986.

Whole preaching is prayer. It emanates from prayer, and it is addressed to God as well as the listener. It is a sacred and equal task of being faithful to the word and the people of God (by feeding them scripturally). The preacher does not recite her own words, but words spoken to her by the Holy Spirit. The preacher who proclaims a whole message must first hear from God and feel that word pulsating in his heart and must equally transmit that impulse to the listener. Initially, when the preacher receives the message, the message is first bargained and shaped by the need of the listener. On the same token, the preacher comes to this process presenting the plea of the listener and the purpose of God for his people. The communication that takes places prior to the preparation of the message is brokered and filtered through the interaction with the preacher and God. What happens during the proclamation of the message is the visitation and presence of the Spirit that birthed the sermon. For example, when a preacher preaches on "give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11), this (like other sermons) is a prayer.

Whole preaching is worship. It attempts to bring the whole view of God to man. Just as Isaiah saw "the train of his robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). Whole preaching brings man to God and God to man. Man was created for the purpose of worship and fellowship with God and in whole preaching, the preacher is attempting that task. When the word of God is preached wholly; it is for the purpose of worship of God.

Whole preaching is prophetic. The preacher is God's mouthpiece. She conveys what the Spirit has spoken to her. She tells them the promises of obeying the word of God and the perils of departing from the word of God. Unlike the prophecies which tell people what they want to hear, whole preaching presents not just the promises but the principles and precepts of the word of God. Whole preaching envelops worship, prayer, prophecy and even more.

Whole preaching is revolutionary: it brings about a radical change and transforms those who encounter the word. It is evolutionary: it eventually affects in conscious and subconscious ways those who encroach its proclamation.

In Chapter Two we will discuss the biblical and theological importance of whole preaching especially to the African-Immigrant context. Scripture and theology will be our guide as we investigate this subject matter. We will also delineate African presence and influence both in the Old and New Testaments—with reference to “Cush/Kush” in the Old Testament and “Ethiopia” in the New Testament.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Religion is a benchmark of African society, and its religious character is intrinsically Christian. African societies all have established faith beliefs, creeds, faith, and convictions that they developed centuries before the creation of modern religions, be it Christianity, Islam, or any other religious beliefs. Subjective views of the past relegated African religious landscape as "paganistic," but a critical assessment proves that Christianity is deeply entrenched. African religious practices cannot be merely interpreted on face value but rather on the function they provide for persons, families, and communities in their relationship to God. For example, when Africans mention the names of the deceased in social ceremonies, some have misinterpreted this to be paganistic and a worship of the dead. This is not so. Rather, it is a recognition of families and their social connections. It is also to affirm the mystery and connection between the living and the dead. Most importantly, it's a recognition of God as the supreme deity and Creator before whom all humanity stands in judgment.

A careful theological analysis would show that elements described as paganistic were merely steppingstones which prove that Christianity is indigenous to Africa. These elements like Old Testament typologies were shadows pointing to the substance. "Typology is not a method of exegesis or interpretation, but the study of historical and theological correspondences between different parts of God's activity among his people in order to find what is typical there."[1] My rendition of typology is not used in the sense of Old Testament types pointing to Christ, rather it is used in the sense that many elements in African culture when closely scrutinized would reveal how they point to God.

1. David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1991), 197-198, quoted in Friedbert Ninow, "Indicators of Typology in the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif," (PhD diss., Andrews University, Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1999), 4.

Some elements that are deemed paganistic are simply a testament to God who reveals himself in mystery. For example, African veneration of elders may serve as a symbol to point to John's mention of twenty-four elders seated around the throne (Revelation 4:4). This is not a literal interpretation of the text but rather a symbolic gesture that certain elements in the African culture have eternal values.[2] It also signifies that the worship of God is an act of veneration, which is embedded in African culture.

Some Christian perspectives of African religion have often been distorted by a bias that sees only conflict, poverty, disease and African primitivity as the basis to define its character and not on common ground of spirituality. Both earlier Christians and some later missionaries did not attempt to study and understand the anthropologies of African spirituality. Instead, they painted it with a broad stroke of "paganism." However, concerted and rigorous theological reflection should be carried out so that one can see the biblical values and correlation situated within African spirituality. When that is successfully done, one can begin to appreciate that Africa is a place of religion, and its spirituality embeds essential elements of Christianity. In this regard, one will be illuminated by scripture that God from creation "set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11b). "Africans are notoriously religious … religion permeates into all departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible to isolate."[3]

However, God has other means of reaching other demographics. He does not prefer one race over the other but makes provision where all can come to him. In Acts 17:22-34, Luke records Paul's sermon in Athens. The Athenians similarly were very religious and had erected an altar to the unknown God. In Paul's mind, this was an attempt for them to know God who has revealed himself in nature. Luke noted that after Paul's sermon, "some people became followers of Paul and believed" (v. 33).

William Willimon writes,

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2. By "symbolic gesture," I mean that it fulfills a certain typological characteristic.

3. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy,* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1969), 1.

> Paul … appealing to their knowledge of creation (for he could not simply recite scripture to pagans who were ignorant of scripture) and to our common humanity, Paul asserts that his God "made the world and everything in it" (V 24). This great God cannot be captured in "shrines made by man" (V 24) but exists over the face of the whole earth that we all may find our true purpose in his service (V 28-29)[4]

Africa in this Context

The name Africa is from the Latin *aprica* ("sunny") or the Greek *aphrike* ("without cold").[5] The Encyclopedia Britannica records that Africa is the second largest continent (after Asia), covering about one-fifth of the total land surface of Earth. It is made up of fifty-four countries and over three thousand tribes. It stretches from the Tropic of Cancer in the north to the Tropic of Capricorn in the south and is divided in the middle by the Equator.[6] The vastness of the land gives a complex and diversified demographics. The north is known for its Arabic and Islamic orientation. This is probably due to its proximity to Middle Eastern Arabic nations. South of the Sahara, the orientation of Africa is different from that of the North because of many factors, including dynamics of European colonial encroachment.

The name "Africa/African" is broad and expansive. However, for the project, I will use the term Africans to mean people (Black Africans) south of the Sahara and around the region of the equator; preferably, the fifteen countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The African-Immigrants in this group as well as some in the central and eastern bloc appear to share similar travel and adaptation patterns in the U.S.

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4. William H. Willimon, *Acts: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988), 143.

5. "Africa," https://www.britannica.com/place/Africa/Geologic-history.

6. "Africa," https://www.britannica.com/place/Africa/Geologic-history.

Africa is known for communal culture, religiosity, and spirituality. Sometimes it is difficult to decipher the differences between these. Somehow its oral tradition becomes the vehicle and custodian of these expressions. These all stitched together help the people to sustain their culture and identity, as well as survive in difficult and uncertain times. Kwame Bediako writes, "primal imagination restores to theology the crucial dimension of living religiously … primal imagination may help us restore the ancient unity of theology and spirituality."[7]

John Mbiti writes,

> Because traditional religion permeates all the department of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is there is his religion… traditional religion is not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is part[8]

African spirituality can be distinguished by its transnational and multinational peculiarities. By African spirituality, I mean African response to nature, religion, culture, and the character it transports in interaction with the gospel. Elements present within its landscape, together with its spirituality serve as a catalyst and sometimes provided the framework for Christianity. Kwame Bediako commented, "African traditional religion has been a serious preparation for the gospel in Africa and forms the major religious substratum for the idioms and existential experience of Christianity in African Life."[9]

By transnational, I mean African movement into foreign culture. My rendering of multinational is, Africans appropriating the gospel in pluralistic context and African identity intersecting with other cultures. In both distinctives, African ingenuity was indispensable in disseminating the gospel to the world.

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7. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: Orbis Books, 1997), 105.

8. Mbiti, *African Religions*, 2.

9. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 82-83.

Michael Battle defines African spirituality as "the formation of self through communal being of relationality … spirituality means a rite of passage of Christian spirituality is prayerfully personhood seeking mutuality with God and neighbor."[10]

Africa/Africans in Scripture and History

The fallacy that Christianity is foreign to Africa has been perpetrated for centuries. Most Africans were indoctrinated to believe that Christianity was solely a European religion. Even today as many non-Christian religions vie for the souls of Africans, they use this mantra to proselytize many. African preachers and pastors were not trained to see the presence of Africans in the Bible, and to embrace, and celebrate their heritage. Preachers and parishioners alike were not schooled in the significant roles Africans played in Christian scriptures and tradition. Preachers were taught to proclaim evangelistic messages and fill their pews with new converts but not draw out their identity from the pages of scripture. The preaching of the gospel will be more effective if Africans are schooled to discover their identity in scripture and proclaim a faith that is indigenous to their history and character.

John Parratt writes,

> "Christian Africa looked across at pagan Europe," and for centuries it was Africa that was the seedbed of Christian theology. Towards the end of the second century the North African Church entered the light of Christian history with thinkers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, while to the East Egypt produced its Origen, Clement, and Athanasius. Most of our Christian doctrines were formulated by these early African theologians.[11]

Christianity was present early on in Nubia, Egypt, and Ethiopia and Luke recognized that some so-called Gentiles were African Christian believers. "North Africa, Numidia, Nubia, Abyssinia and Egypt

10. Michael Battle, *The Black Church in America: African American Christian Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xv.

11. John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 3.

were home to Christianity right from the first century."[12] Another phase of Christianity to Africa was the European missionary expansions. Galgolo writes, "that the third phase of African Christianity began with the missionary work in Sierra Leone (initially a home for freed slaves), with colonial and western imperialism controlled by America and England."[13] I would describe the fourth phase as the migratory movement of Africans and the dispossessed to the First World in search of economic opportunities and better living conditions. Jehu Hanciles writes, "Christian expansion and migratory movement have historically been intimately intertwined; and throughout the history of the faith, migrant movement has been a causative factor in both Christian advance and Christian doctrine."[14]

Although the term "Africa/African" never appeared in the Bible, yet the designation used was "Cush/Kush," "Ethiopia" and "Egypt."

David Adamo writes,

> Egypt as (*Mitzrayyim* in Hebrew), along with the cognates was mentioned seven hundred and forty (740) times in the Old Testament. *Cush* or Ethiopia appears fifty-eight (58) times in the Old Testament… Cush was translated as Ethiopia thirty-nine (39) times and was transliterated nineteen times in the Old Testament. It means that the land of Africa and her people were mentioned seven hundred and ninety-eight times (798) in the Old Testament. There is no nation or continent that has been mentioned repeatedly like that of African nations. The implication of this is that ancient Israel is closely tied with the history of the Black people and Africa.[15]

In the Old Testament, *Kush* and *Kushites* are used to refer to Africa and Africans in terms of a particular geographical location, and as names of persons who came from Africa or whose ancestors are of African origin. In terms of geographical, it is described as the extreme part of the world (Ezekiel 29:10,

12. Joseph D. Galgolo, *African Christianity: The Stranger Within* (Limuru, Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, 2012), 8.

13. Galgolo, *African Christianity,* 10.

14. Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2008), 3.

15. David T. Adamo, *Africa and Africans in the New Testament* (New York: University Press of America, 2006), 22.

Isaiah 45:14, Job 28:19). The inhabitants of Kush were described as tall and smooth-skinned people. Their blackness becomes proverbial.[16]

Isaiah 18 and 19, mentions Cush (Ethiopia), and Egypt in the prophecies against the nations.

Brueggemann writes,

> Ethiopia is actively engaged in international diplomacy and military engagement is connected to a cosmic struggle with Yahweh… Egypt an abiding superpower in the ancient world is endlessly on the horizon of Judah's geopolitics and is a force in Judah's theological imagination… through all the vagaries of international politics, with the rise and fall of many successive powers to the North, Egypt remains an undisturbed constant to the south.[17]

David Adamo in his book *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament* listed several noted Africans in the Old Testament: The African wife of Moses in Numbers 12:1-9; the African military [General] in King David's Army in 2 Samuel 18:21-32; the African Queen in 1 Kings 10:1-13. Just to name a few.[18]

In a follow-up book, *Africa and Africans in the New Testament,* David Adamo listed the following places in Africa: Egypt, Ethiopia, Alexandria, Libya, Cyrene, and Niger. These places were remarkable for their historical, political, economic, educational, geographical, and religious significance. From these places would spring up a faith that has encapsulated the world. This clearly shows that Africa was significant in God's plan, especially so for the dissemination of the gospel.

Other Africans mentioned in New Testament were Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26), and Simeon called Niger (Acts 13:1).[19] Just to name these two. "Simon was very likely a member of the Jewish community at Cyrene. Like all the Israelites, his supreme goal in life was to visit the Holy City for the

16. David T. Adamo, *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 14-15.

17. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 152-155.

18. Adamo, *Old Testament*, 81-126.

19. Frank Snowden commented that Ethiopians who are black skinned is *Niger* as equivalent of Ethiopia. Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 3. See also Adamo, *New Testament,* 32.

Passover Feast, an ambition he was about to fulfill."[20] Some scholars think that these two were the same person but there is not sufficient evidence to corroborate their claims. "Simeon called Niger" perhaps indicates that he was a black, since Niger is the Latin word for black. Some have suggested that he might have come from Cyrene, like Lucius, or elsewhere from North Africa."[21]

J. Daniel Hays writes,

> The mention of a Black African as a leader in the church in Antioch certainly has theological significance for Luke… Acts 8 and 13 intrinsically links Ethiopian Eunuch who was a black from Meroe to … Acts 13, a black African … is now cited as one of the central leaders in this new burgeoning church in Antioch. So, Luke shows clearly that not only is the gospel go to all peoples, including black Africans, are to be integrally included into the church, the new people of God.[22]

Echoes of African Christianity are heard way back in the pivotal events of Acts 2. Luke's record of Africans' presence at the event of Pentecost strategically placed Africans at the birth of the church. The demography of the audience at Pentecost and the evidence of the languages spoken puts Africa at the inception of the church:

> Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues! (Acts. 2:8-11)

Acts 2, is a preamble for Acts 8:26-40. Acts 2 sets the foundation of the gospel to Africa (Egypt, Libya, etc.). Acts 8, buttressed this foundation with the evidence of an African conversion to Christianity. The gospel to the Ethiopian is played on a transnational and multinational context. The Ethiopian Eunuch coming from Ethiopia to Jerusalem indicates a crossing of boundaries, and Philip coming from a

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20. Msgr. Francis J. Weber, *Characters from the Gospels: Thirty-Six Sketches* (NH: Loreto Publication, 2013), 44.

21. John B. Polhill, *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of the Holy Scripture.* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 275.

22. J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 178.

Jewish culture indicates an interaction of cultures. This epochal event is a cogent place to begin to frame and understand an African, biblical, and theological perspective:

> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian [a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."
>
> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.
>
> "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.
>
> This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:
>
> "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
> and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
> so he did not open his mouth.
> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
> Who can speak of his descendants?
> For his life was taken from the earth."
>
> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.
>
> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. (Acts 8:26-40)

Luke sees African Involvement in Acts not as the beginning of their faith but as a continuation of their spirituality. It is through their spirituality that the promise of the Holy Spirit was manifested. African participation marks a missionary enterprise and a diaspora movement to all the people beyond Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem, "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The witness of the gospel to Ethiopia as Luke sees it, is the work of the Holy Spirit in shifting historical, geographical, and demographical

boundaries. Roger Stronstad commented: "Acts is the story of geographic and racial advance of the gospel. It is also the dramatic story of the complimentary gift of the Holy Spirit."[23]

Acts 8:26-40—A Case for Whole Person Preaching

Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch provides the blueprint for whole person to whole person preaching in an African-Immigrant context. It is no accident that the Holy Spirit anointed this diaspora event as a model for whole person preaching. The interaction between these two men shows how the gospel is the unifying factor between people of all races.

Luke proudly identifies the nationality of the listener as "an Ethiopian Eunuch," an "important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians')" (Acts 8:27).

Frank Snowden writes: "Color was obviously uppermost in the minds of the Greeks and Romans …describing Ethiopian … the distinguishing mark of the Ethiopian was the color of his skin … Ethiopians were the yard stick by which antiquity measured colored people."[24]

Philip's dialogue with the Ethiopian was intriguing. The preacher and listener were in a common place to assess and relate to each other. The assessment started with questions and not with assumptions. Questions are the clinician's tool to foster further dialogue and to elicit answers. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked (v. 30), and the Ethiopian replied with a question "How can I unless someone explains it to me?" (v. 31). First and foremost, these questions show how vested the preacher and listeners are in this dialogue. Every relationship is measured by the inquiry and investment partners put into it. Secondly, these questions, in very clear terms, express the importance

23. Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 63.

24. Snowden*, Blacks in Antiquity*, 2.

of preaching: “how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14). The listener expressed a strong and urgent need to be heard and, most significantly, to hear the gospel.

Effective preaching raises questions and, questions raised are the means to solving the listeners’ puzzles. Haddon Robinson advocated that a sermon should not “ignore the life-wrenching problems and questions of our hearers.”[25] Questions foster dialogue and develop rapport, and this will motivate both preacher and listener to form a bond. The bond created will evoke a sense of wonder and amazement as they both turn and worship the God of their salvation. Robinson writes, “preaching is a living interaction involving God, the preacher and the congregation”[26]

Guided by the listener’s continuous questions Philip was able to structure his sermon with a central idea or “big idea.” The central or “big idea” of the sermon is the convincing and governing idea of the sermon. Grady Davis defines it as “generative” and also as “a well-prepared sermon is the embodiment, the development, the full statement of a significant thought.”[27]

The listener asks the question: “‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:34-35). Every preacher should imagine the listener’s unspoken questions and respond to the inquires brought forth. Undergirding the questions are the listeners anxieties, insecurities, and, most importantly, their thirst for the word of God.

This question easily guides Philip to focus his sermon on the central idea. When a preacher “thumb nails” the big idea of her sermon, she facilitates a unity between listener and preacher. This creates a connection where preacher and listener share a similar view of the sermon. Furthermore, a big

25. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 47.

26. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 4-5.

27. Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 20-21.

idea of preaching creates an ambience, where listener and preacher are totally vested in the biblical content of the sermon, which enables them to embrace the rhythm of the message and its interpretation. A sermon centered on a big idea makes the word easy to articulate. It also makes the word pleasant to the listening ear. Every sermon should create a rhythm which would bring the preacher and listeners in sync. The big idea of the sermon would give or facilitate a sermonic rhythm.

Philip's big idea centered around Christological, soteriological, and biblical theology. He pulled the curtain back from the Prophet Isaiah and proclaimed the suffering messiah. Interestingly, Isaiah 53 begins with the call and work of a preacher: "Who has believed our report" (v.1) and ends up with the listener, "for he bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors" (v. 12). Philip's focus on the big idea of the sermon engaged the listener and made the message easy to assimilate. His message was very effective because of the result; the listener identifies his need to be baptized.

Walter Brueggemann writes,

> It is no wonder that the narrative of Acts 8:26-40, Philip helps the Ethiopian to understand the text. Philip did so, 'starting with scripture' (v.35) and ending with baptism (vv. 36-38), the access of an alternative life in the word. The poem surely intends, in its endless generativity, to be reread and reheard and remembered, always with a concrete particularity but always with a transformative inscrutability that changes everything.[28]

Philip's sermon sets the standard for *sola scriptura*. Luke informs his readers that "Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus" (v.34). Philip's sermon to the Ethiopian is centered on scripture. His preaching shows that it is the scripture which gives birth to a sermon, and it is scripture which illuminates the mind of the preacher which in turn helps the listener to know the mind of God (Romans 11:34). His sermon begins with the written word but also points the listener to the revealed word: Jesus the Son of God.

28. Walter Brueggemann*, Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 150.

The author of the book of Hebrews declares, "he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he also made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his power" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

The authority of every sermon comes from the written, living and breathing word of God. When some preachers read the scripture from which they are preaching, they quickly abandon the very scripture they read. They end up circumventing the scripture and supplementing it with their own machinations, thus, abdicating the solid and profound authority from which to proclaim the word of God effectively. Their words may be full of human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:13) but lacking the *gravitas* of the word of God, which is "alive and active. Sharper than a double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow" (Hebrews 4:12). John Stott argues that preaching must start with a strong conviction of scripture: "it is certain that we cannot handle scripture adequately in the pulpit if our doctrine of scripture is inadequate."[29]

In preaching to the Ethiopian, Philip returned to the declarative—the spoken (oral) word which was first spoken into space "let there be" and now spoken into consciousness "it has become." Philip started with the written word but reconciled the written word with the spoken word. The preacher must deal with the written word which is distanced from the listener. To make the written text clearer to the listener the preacher must walk through the bridge to the mysterious place where the text was first spoken. This synthesis of written text and oral word brings about the pulsating rhythm of the voice of God, where the text returns to its place of origin. This illuminates scripture and apprehends the attention of the listener. The preacher should start with the written text and transport the listener to that place and time where the word was first spoken. This is the mystery of preaching: a preacher's

29. John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 58.

ability to take the listener back to that place where the word was first spoken. It is also the marriage of preaching: where text unites with orality.[30]

In dealing with the oral word, the preacher must make preaching as theologically questioning God. By theologically questioning God, I mean the following: raising questions as if the preacher is engaged in a divine dialogue but also asking questions that would engage the minds of the listeners. Furthermore, she must devise an orality that critically examines context, text, and self. When the oral word intersects text and context, the listener is transported to that original place where the word was birthed. The marriage of the biblical world and the contemporary world is the place where the listener begins to assimilate the word and appropriate its inerrancy and inspiration. Ong writes that "print encourages a sense of closure," but the spoken word invites the listener to a deeper and fuller revelation of God.[31] "Written words are isolated from the fuller context in which spoken words came into being."[32] The listener indicated in his questioning that he wanted to be led from the written text to the spoken word when he asked, "tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" (v. 35). In response, Philip led the listener from Isaiah's written text to Jesus the Savior, whom the prophet was talking about. Because his preaching shifted from the written text to the spoken word, the eunuch was able to embrace the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Fred Craddock writes: "the universe grew silent with the development of a literal culture. The spoken word came to be regarded as a modification of the written word rather than vice versa."[33]

30. I credit this to Dr. Philip Thorne (Adjunct Professor of Preaching and Cohort in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) who spoke in one of our classes on the mystery of preaching and marriage of preaching. Philip R. Thorne, "The Mystery of Preaching and Marriage of Preaching," (lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary).

31. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), 101.

32. Ong, *Orality and the Word,* 32.

33. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 10.

I would argue that Philip's preaching was a classic case for narrative theology. By narrative theology, I mean re-appropriating, explaining, and unifying biblical stories to demonstrate how they address the listener's urgent need and how they fit into God's salvific plan. These stories are recorded for the listener so that they can be retold throughout posterity and to help them relate to the overall scheme of scripture. A scripture passage which begins with "he was led like a sheep to the slaughter" is a case for narrative theology.

From my native Sierra Leone, we heard the stories of "Bra Spider"—translated to mean "Brother Spider."[34] Africans were also told the stories of "the Baboon" and many other animals as a schematic device to connect us to nature and the God of nature. Entertaining as these stories were, they were narrative meant to teach morality; but most significantly to point to the nature of God and the God of all creation who is above all. John Mbiti writes, "Much of the theological activity in Christian Africa today is being done as oral theology … from the living experiences of Christians … in the open, from the pulpit, in the market place, in the home as people pray or read and discuss scripture."[35]

The significance of stories is that they stimulate brain functioning and elicit memories. The preacher who stimulates memory employs preaching as an educational tool. Effective narrative preaching can stimulate our memory banks and ignite "memory bumps." Whole person preaching is to teach as well as to evoke the nature of God. "Every effective preacher knows that story rivets attention and increases retention."[36]

Dorothea Erbele-Kuester writes, "the concept of narrativity refers to the fact that we live by stories … stories are capable of engaging us to the point of making us feel part of them … it is an

34. The story of the "Bra Spider" is also told in the South (U.S.) however, this story as well as other stories may have migrated into the New World during slavery.

35. John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 229.

36. Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 87.

anthropological reality. Telling stories is crucial to the way we open up to our world … stories enable us to take part in other worlds."[37]

Amos Wilder writes: "The men who gave us the New Testament employed the world pictures and the salvation pictures of their own time to set forth their faith. For the word of God speaks with the words of everyday language of men. But the everyday words of men are image-words, and the word of God necessarily employs these."[38]

An interesting theology of person can be drawn from Acts 8:27. "…on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians'). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship." Luke's description of the listener (the Ethiopian) provides a foundation for Philip to forge a theology of person. In this verse, there is demographical data: "an Ethiopian." There is a personal data: "a Eunuch." There is professional data: "an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake." There is spiritual data: "this man had gone to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:27).

These four cardinal points (demographical, personal, professional, and spiritual) are a foundational assessment tool for whole person preaching. (Although personal and professional data are part of demographics, this might be an exception, where one diligently gleans minute and critical facts.) Information gathered from this assessment would lift the shroud obfuscating the identity of the listener. The listener would realize that the preacher has entered his world. By the same token, the veil befuddling the preacher from the listener would dissipate. Thus, creating a leverage where preacher and listener view each other as whole persons.

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37. Dorothea Eebele-Kuester, "A Short Study of Narratology in Biblical Studies," in *Religious Stories We Live By: Narrative Approaches in Theology and Religious Studies,* eds. R. Ruard Ganzevoort, Maakie de Haart, and Michael Scherer-Rath (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 75.

38. Amos N. Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), 129.

The root word for "demography" comes from the Ancient Greek word, *demos* meaning "people;" and *graphē* from Greek, Latin, and English, means "writing, drawing, and recording." The function of a graph is to show how things are in relation to each other, to evaluate and measure data. A skillful correlation of this data would sharpen the preacher's interpretation and delivery, thereby, making the sermon very effective. Proper assessment would convince listener that the sermon is worth listening to. This significantly would give the preacher the energy to proclaim the message and provide the listener with the motivation to embrace the sermon. "Preaching needs to be perceived, understood, practiced and appreciated for being *holy energy*."[39]

Most importantly, the preacher would be convinced that the sermon is worth proclaiming. Every good preacher should travel simultaneously on both turfs—the world of a preacher and that of a listener. By doing so, he would communicate succinctly to himself and to the listener because both listener and preacher are active participants in the communicative process.

One can argue that Luke's demographical data informs Philip's preaching. This demographical data shows the correlation with the listener (the Ethiopian) and with the preacher (Philip). Furthermore, this data shows the listener's (Ethiopian's) relationship with God. Having this data gives the preacher a sense of the listener's personhood, individuality, culture, and spirituality. When preaching is designed on this theological premise; the preacher begins to understand man in the framework of God, and the preacher understands herself as clothed in the very humanity through whom God incarnates. In this capacity, the preacher understands that both she and listener are participants in this preaching event, where God's overarching voice speaks to them. This is "whole" preaching because God and humanity unite in this homiletical experience.

39. Richard H. Cox. *Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brain Processes Sermons,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 80.

One can argue that a good understanding of the demography of the listener is a framework for a good theological anthropology. Furthermore, this equips the preaching with a foundation and a thrust to relate to the listener. My rendering of theological anthropology is the image and likeness of God imparted in man (Genesis 1:27) and the continued expression of God imprinted in us. "Man is a microcosm, or world in miniature because he is an eminent specimen of power, goodness, and contains in him wonders enough to occupy the attention of our minds."[40] "One's self-knowledge is a step towards proper knowing of God."[41] This expression means that God and man are eternally connected. One cannot understand the former without the later. Both are meant to co-exist in a perpetual relationship and this is the goal of whole preaching. Thus, creating a setting and as scripture states, God dwells in his people (2 Corinthians 6:16, KJV).

This is the dynamic that propelled Philip to Gaza. The Ethiopian was made in the likeness and image of God and the angel of the Lord sent Philip to reconnect and rekindle that relationship. Because of this unending relationship, the Holy Spirit reignites the word of the preacher as a second creation to his *imago Dei* (in the preacher as well as the listener). Philip's preaching to the Ethiopian is a testament of his theology of person: that both Philip and Ethiopian were made in the image of God. The African-Immigrant church must emulate this model in its proclamation that Africans are made in the image of God— "for in him we live and move and have our being … we are his offspring" (Acts 17:28).

Luke provided an interesting personal data. He tells his readers that the Ethiopian was a eunuch. This dimension of his personality creates confusion for the reader. The word eunuch has variants of meanings. The *Dictionary of the Bible* defines Eunuch as: "In the proper sense of the word a eunuch is an emasculated human being (Dt 23:1), but it is not absolutely certain that the Heb. sâris always has this

40. Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (New Haven: H. Howe, 1816), 82.

41. Kelly M. Kapic, *Reading Christian Theology in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 1-111.

signification, and the uncertainty is reflected in our Eng. tr., where 'officer' and 'chamberlain' are frequently found."[42] Sean D. Burke elucidated further that "the fourth dimension of the Eunuch relates to the person's official responsibilities and position."[43] "Acts 8:27 implies that this man was physically a eunuch … the theological point that Luke is probably trying to underline is that eunuchs were excluded from full membership in Israel."[44]

To further complicate this subject matter, Matthew records the words of Jesus: "For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it" (Matthew 19:12). Persons are enshrouded in mystery because there are many layers to what make us who we are. Scripture gives us this dialectic of person—between being and doing. Paul in Romans writes, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do" (Romans 7:15-16).

Decoding personhood is a very difficult assessment. Persons are masked in what I term as a cycle of ambiguity and ambivalence: they vacillate between doubts and uncertainty. Furthermore, in persons also is what I term as a law of agreement and a law of contradiction: they dither between certainty and conflicts. This duality exists in the person. To understand a listener, many layers of persona must be peeled off before the gospel can penetrate the identity of the listener. The miracle of preaching is that the listener begins to realize that the preacher is piercing through different layers of their personalities. This would allow the listener to submit to the preaching of the word, because he is experiencing the miracle of the word penetrating through the masks he wears.

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42. James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1916), 246

43. Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies in Ambiguity in Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers: 2013), 21.

44. Hays, *From Every People and Nation,* 173.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Philip was able to preach a whole gospel to a whole person. He was aware that the word of God must infiltrate the different layers of this "believing convert." The word must penetrate nationality, occupation, and every stratum of his being. Eugene Lowry argues that a sermon must deal with ambivalence and offset the equilibrium, "upsetting the equilibrium is based not alone on its being a tested literary device; it is born of the nature of being human."[45]

The word "profession," if fully understood, has the concept of "a calling." In his book*, The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber argues that profession/work is a calling.[46] If profession then is understood as calling, then certain elements of people's character are embedded in their profession. The Ethiopian Eunuch is "an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians')." Understanding what he does may also illuminate who he is.

The occupation of a person reveals certain characteristics forming or deforming their personality. For example, a medical professional might be compelled by the Hippocratic Oath and a lawyer by ethical or legal codes. In this case, their professions might alter their character. They will have to succumb to the rules of their occupation despite their upbringings and prejudices. By the same token, they also have a personality that is also different from their occupation. However, the preacher must take this assessment as a sacred task.

Having understood his occupation gave Philip an inkling into various layers of his character. The listener's occupation might be the layer through which the word must infiltrate in order to reach the inner dimensions of a person. Philip's preaching was effective because he was able to penetrate the

45. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 29

46. Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 135–138.

social and professional world of the listener. What a person does preoccupies their minds. It also shapes their character. A person's occupation shows what occupies their life. When the preacher is invited into this space, she may uncover what the listeners profess to be or not to be and help them to be who they should become (as whole persons). Profession can be a mask to conceal identity, but it can also be a light to reveal their character. Persons and their professions are always in need of the saving grace of the word of God. Persons have their troubles and professions have their yokes and the word of God delivers from both. Whole person preaching takes this into account.

This Ethiopian had a spirituality prior to the encounter with Philip. Luke writes that "this man had gone to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:27). This Ethiopian Eunuch believed by faith in his Creator even when he did not understand what he was reading. His baptism was not the start of his faith in the God of the Bible. He was a studious and pious believer. He was reading the scripture to enrich his faith. David Adamo writes "that the so-called Ethiopian Eunuch is an example of these people who go to Jerusalem annually for worship."[47] Most importantly, he was more likely a God fearer (a non-Jew) who identified with the God of the Jews and he wanted to have a firsthand encounter with the movement that was sweeping the world.

As a reward for his inquisitiveness, the angel of the Lord directed Philip to the southern road of the desert that goes down towards Jerusalem and Gaza. His spirituality was endorsed with baptism of water and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Because of this dynamic spiritual formation, he could also be linked to other believers whom Luke referred to as "God fearers" as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10) who also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

47. Adamo, *New Testament*, 83.

Philip, a beneficiary of the Spirit's leading and assessment, was able to preach a whole gospel to address the whole need of his listener. Craddock commented: "if the preaching of the church would address the whole man, then let the imagination play over the facts and awaken tired spirits."[48]

In whole preaching, the Spirit of God becomes the go-between preacher and listener. This is three-dimensional formation of preacher, spirit and person. The preacher's voice succumbs to the voice of the Holy Spirit and the listener embraces a voice superseding that of the preacher. Whole preaching facilitates a triadic setting where the Holy Spirit transmit the gospel vertically and horizontally. When the preacher gives way to the voice of the Holy Spirit, the whole word reaches the whole person. Jesus said, "the words I have spoken to you–they are full of the Spirit and life" (John 6:63). Although this scripture was uttered to the disciples, yet the preacher is God's mouthpiece and his words are quickened by God's Spirit.

The scripture that the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading was from Isaiah 53. This was in reference to Israel's exilic experience. This poem was about marginalization. Isaiah uses terms as "oppressed, afflicted, cut off, voiceless, suffering, sickness, an outsider, perversion of justice;" all these terms relate to marginality:

> Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.
> He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
> He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
> Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
> Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.
> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;
> the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;
> and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
> He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
> he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

48. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 71.

> By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? (Isaiah 53:1-8a)

In some capacity, the Ethiopian can identify with Israel's experience in this scripture. Like Israel in their exilic experience, Luke introduces him as an outsider. As an outsider, he fits the criteria of obscurity and marginality. Brueggemann commented: "Indeed, the servant began in something like humiliation… out of dry ground … nothing to notice or admire or value … he was a rejected person, not valued perhaps ostracized."[49]

This scripture bridges the two worlds: the original Israel's exilic audience and the Ethiopian's foreign experience. In addition, this scripture introduces another dynamic—the suffering servant, Jesus—a true incarnation of another world dimension. Jesus is an outsider coming to a world that he created but that does not know him. John writes, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1: 9-11).

These all intersect in the "gospel-space:" a place of suffering and strangeness, but a place where the gospel speaks clearly to alienation. Philip beginning with the scripture would bridge the world of historicity to the world of contemporary experience and to that of eternity. Israel's exilic experience and the Ethiopian's contemporary experience demonstrates that they both are destined for Christ's eternal redemption. Indeed, it is no accident that the Gospel is the panacea for Israel's exilic problems as much as the gospel is for the African-Immigrant's troubles. The suffering servant understands the plight of disenfranchised minorities and he embraces them as his people.

Brueggemann writes,

> It is cause for amazement that Israel's most daring and definitional promises were uttered in exile, that is precisely when the evidence seems to preclude such hope. The promises are

49. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 145.

assertions that God is not a prisoner of circumstances, but that God can call into existence that which does not exist (cf. Rom. 4:17).[50]

Towards an African-Immigrant Theology/Homiletic

It is in this heightened and tenuous and untenable immigration landscape that the African-Immigrant church is called to embrace a theology of exile and to seek the voice of the suffering servant. Furthermore, the church must understand that it has been sent into a "gospel-space:" a transnational and multinational landscape in which the voice of Jesus the suffering servant must echo in our theology as "witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "The gospel arose out of that kind of radical break in human affairs when old customs and continuities are undermined; it reflected that level of experience in which man and the world are made and unmade."[51]

No wonder that when polls on immigration are conducted, the overwhelming response is that "immigration is bad for the country." Various printed journalistic literatures have informed us about the public reaction. "A *Newsweek* poll reports: 60% of Americans say that immigration is bad for the country."[52] Joining the bandwagon is *Time* magazine: "A Most Debated Issue: Illegal Workers Depress Wages." In this article, Donald Huddle, professor of economics at Rice University, argues that, "immigrant labor displaces American workers and cheats the tax paying public in a variety of ways."[53] In the same issue of *Time* there was a lead article entitled: "The Changing Face of America: How Long Will It Be Before the Third World Overwhelms the First World?"[54] And with the gruesome incident of

50. Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 22.

51. Wilder, *Language of the Gospel,* 131.

52. "The Economic Cost of Immigration," *Newsweek*, August 9, 1993.

53. Donald Huddle, "A Most Debated Issue: Illegal Workers Depress Wages," *Time*, Time Archive, July 1985.

54. "The Changing Face of America: How Long Will It Be Before the Third World Overwhelms the First World?" *Time*, July 8, 1985, Cover.

September 11, 2001, America (and the rest of the Western world) needs a lot to fear about immigrants. She must guard her borders and know who comes in and goes out. An August 12, 2019 *Washington Post* reports that "Trump Official Moves to Deny Green Cards, Path to Citizenship for Poor Immigrants."[55]

Even as I write this thesis, the Coronavirus has caused a lot of scare and havoc, and the President is seeking to ban Africans and Asians from entering the U.S. Ishaan Tharoor, in a *Washington Post* February 5, 2020 article, writes that "Trump Scapegoats almost a quarter of African Population."[56] Today, there are many reasons to believe that immigration is something to be feared, if not dreaded. This phobia now has a greater implication for the immigrant pastor and her congregation.

Justo Gonzalez observed that

> Both groups [citizens and residents] live in ambiguity. The literal exiles live in the ambiguity between gratitude and anger. We are grateful, because this country has offered us a refuge others did not. But at the same time we are angry, mostly for two reasons: first, because many of us are coming to the generalization that even though we have given up the countries of our birth, we shall end up our days as exiles, as people who live in a land that is not theirs, that welcomes them up to a point and then shuts the door.[57]

The African-Immigrant church can better deal with this challenge by formulating a communal theology in its preaching and practice. Most importantly, the African-Immigrant church should heed the words of the Prophet Jeremiah to "seek the peace of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7) in which they find themselves as immigrants. They must aid in the social and economic development of their new home.

As the prophet writes, they must strive for and work for the prosperity of the city (Jeremiah 27:4-7). Even though they are exiles, they must be nation builders, knowing that they are accountable to God who owns the earth because the "earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). Also, they

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55. Abigail Hauslohner, Nick Miroff, Maria Sacchetti and Tracy Jan, "Trump Official Moves to Deny Green Cards, Path to Citizenship for Poor Immigrants," *Washington Post,* August 12, 2019.

56. Ishaan Tharoor, "Trump Scapegoats Almost a Quarter of Africa's Population," *Washington Post,* February 5, 2020.

57. Justo L. Gonzalez, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 41.

must be aware that they are just sojourners (or tenants) in the land (Leviticus 25:23—KJV). Furthermore, they must realize that those of the host nation themselves are equally the people of God and that they are created in the image of God. In forming this communal theology, they collaborate with their host, work for the common good and not seek to endlessly alienate themselves.

I am convinced that preaching is the "oral space" place to birth a theology to the whole person. The dynamics created from preaching should go beyond the pulpit and into people's social domains (not only to themselves but to the natives of the land). One can glean from Luke and study a classic case of communal theology. Philip and the Ethiopian were able to bridge the chasm that existed between them. This communal theology was the work of the "angel of the Lord leading Philip to go south to the road—desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This communal space was the work of the Holy Spirit which brought both men and race into communion. As the African-Immigrant church deals with rejection and humiliation; it must be assured that "God is working his purpose out" because the suffering servant is sent amidst the plight of his people. They should learn that some members of the host nation are suffering themselves, just as they are. The church must celebrate that in the throes of marginalization, God is cutting across geographical boundaries and fostering a community of the spirit. Philip's whole person preaching methodology is symptomatic of a communal theology that cuts across person, race, and place of origin.

Roger Stronstad writes,

> Acts is the story of the geographic and racial advance of the gospel. It is also the dramatic story of the complementary gifts of the Holy Spirit… In the charismatic theology of Luke, … outpouring of the Holy Spirit actualize and illustrate the universality of the prophethood of believers… the prophetic gift of the Spirit effects the charismatic calling and equipping of the various groups for vocation or service in the advance of the gospel. [58]

The mindset of the typical first generation African-Immigrant is that the church is her family. Displaced from her place of origin and culture, she is looking for an attachment that addresses her sense

58. Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke,* 71-72.

of loss and searching for guidance through an uncertain terrain. Unlike the African American preacher who may deal with "double-consciousness,"[59] the African-Immigrant pastor must formulate a theology in a tripartite context (triple consciousness): African, Immigrant and Diaspora. As Africans, they are aliens in a foreign land. As immigrants they have lost their home and some of their identity. In the Diaspora, they do not belong anywhere. When they go home, it does not feel like home, and they do not feel fully embraced wherever they find themselves.

African-Immigrant Christianity itself has a kaleidoscopic character: a pluralistic culture and variables that color its identity. Kwame Bediako argues that tradition, religion, Christianity, Islam, religious indifference, and materialism all coalesce to form the African personality.[60] Colonialism, poverty, oppression, demonic influences, displacement, and survival must be added to that list. When a pastor ascends the pulpit, her theology must be framed as a "pastoral-preacher-counselor and theologian," articulating and interpreting these factors rightly within this context. Her task is to deal with these issues and uncover the masks hiding, forming, and defacing the person. Any escapist attempt would never produce a whole message to the whole person—an intentional theology is the prophylactic measure for this context.

Harry Emerson Fosdick commented,

> people come to church on Sunday with every kind of personal difficulty and problems flesh is heir to. A sermon was meant to meet such needs; it should be personal counseling on a grand scale … the problems that came to church on Sunday in the minds and hearts of the worshippers were not simply individual but social, economic, and international.[61]

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59. This Double-Consciousness this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on amused contempt and pity ... twoness … two souls … two warring … whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Illustrated Souls of Black Folk,* ed. Eugene F. Provenso (New York: Routledge, 2015), 14.

60. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 24.

61. Lionel Crocker, *Harry Emerson Fosdick's Art of Preaching* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1971), 13–14.

In order to formulate a theology that addresses the multiplex needs of African-Immigrants, the church must adopt Luke's mantra: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us" (Acts 15:28). This is the theology of the Holy Spirit which prompted the disciples and the Early Church to impact their world. In my estimation, a theology of the Holy Spirit is different from Pentecostalism and Christianity as we know it. The theology of the Holy Spirit is about the whole person, his experience and living circumstances. Whereas, Pentecostalism is a movement, the theology of the Holy Spirit is a frame of mind that is congruent to scripture—especially the instruction of Jesus. "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:25-26). In this scripture, Jesus was speaking to his disciples, but African-Immigrant Christianity must appropriate it because the Holy Spirit "himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16).

A theology of the Holy Spirit is a Wholistic Theology. It is in conformity with scripture, and it is Christologically informed. One can argue that African theology (according to Luke's account of the baptism of the Holy Spirit) was shaped by the movement of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit baptism and the evidence of (African) xenoglossia and glossolalia (Acts. 2). In Acts 8, it was the geographical, educational, theological and diaspora peculiarities framing the church. When the African-Immigrant appropriates a theology of the Holy Spirit, he is living in obedience to scripture. It becomes a remedy against ungodliness, immorality, and sin because the theology of the Holy Spirit means, "without holiness, no one will see God" (Hebrews 12:14).

In this theology of the Spirit, the preacher is compelled to proclaim the gospel in an accent of globalization rather than revert to the "Galilean accent," tribal or provincial tongue. The African-Immigrant church is a product of transnational and multinational forces. All these forces collide to produce a new accent of globalization through which the gospel is proclaimed.

Mark Gornik writes; “African Christians build community life as a way of responding to and living within the global city. African Christianity becomes a way of understanding our global world.”[62] Preaching to an African-Immigrant must take on this new homiletic.

Conclusion

By way of summary:

First, the preacher stands as a carrier of Judaic heritage, embracing the Old Testament and the entirety of scripture. The Bible in the Old Testament mentions and celebrates Africans. In the Exodus, Africans might have been part of the mixed multitude who came out of Egypt with the Israelites. Their presence in scripture and with the formation of people of God means that they are integral in the plan of God. They together with other nations formed this diversity that was established in the Old Testament. The African and African-Immigrant must proclaim this Judaic heritage as part of her own because they were not an afterthought in God’s plan. When Africans and African-Immigrants proclaim the gospel and celebrate it as their heritage, the preaching of the gospel will be very effective. Their hearers would embrace the faith as their own and it would dispel the notion that they are being force-fed a gospel that is alien to them.

Second, the preacher must embrace African spirituality by gleaning symbols, contents and typologies that are congruent with scripture. One cannot overemphasize that preaching is an interpretative act. The preacher must search for the eternal and spiritual values for every element in African culture. She should endeavor to turn over every stone, diligently search every crevice within the culture and interpret the typological significance of every element. When the listener sees her culture and person present in scripture, she will have a good understanding of her relationship with God. She

62. Mark Gornik, *World Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 47.

will not hold her culture in contempt (as she was indoctrinated to believe) but see the mercies of God and celebrate the grace of God lavished towards her. Everything that God has situated within the African context is placed there for a purpose. Instead of dismissing them as inconsequential, the preacher should demonstrate how these point to the God of creation. African-Immigrant preachers must diligently look within its landscape and draw out golden nuggets that God has implanted in their culture and psyche and scripturally proclaim a theology and homiletic that was assigned to them for this purpose.

Third, the preacher is the custodian of Apostolic principles—building on the principles laid by the Apostles at the foundation of the church. This model was forged in a pluralistic environment through the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke was deliberate in naming Africans right at the inception of Christianity. Acts chapter two, verses eight and thirteen celebrated Africans who were instrumental either as witnesses, proselytes, leaders, prophets, and teachers in mission of the church. Africans are part of the apostolic mission of the early church. When the listeners understand that they were part and parcel of the faith, (not as impassive or docile participants but as movers and shakers), they will embrace the faith. Every great preacher must make the listener feel a part of the movement through which God works. Most importantly, African-Immigrant preachers should educate their listeners about their heritage because people will embrace fervently what they believe is theirs.

Fourth, the African-Immigrant preacher is the product of mission. She has crossed paths with European and American missionary endeavors. They all fit into the plan of God in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. Together with her counterparts, each brings its diversity into the gospel that God intended from the very beginning. This multi-cultural dimension redeems the gospel from being imprisoned by one entity and from being provincial, and sets it on a horizon as a global faith. It is not an accident that God has used this faith to unite his people of many races and pigmentation.

Fifth, this new homiletic is shaped by diaspora theology. First and foremost, it identifies with and celebrates Jesus as an African refugee (Matthew 2:13-15), who was in search of political freedom and survival. African diaspora theology is built on this Christological framework. That Jesus, whom they serve, identifies with Africans and with the displaced. Furthermore, it identifies with countless people who are displaced because of economic, political, and social reasons.

This new homiletic considers the plights and needs of the dispossessed. It alerts the preacher about the seriousness of her task: That suffering humanity must be brought to the suffering savior who understands their plight; that the suffering savior was once a refugee and is the savior of all those who come to him. When this becomes the foundation of preaching, then it gives birth to whole preaching. This in turn will propel the preacher to embrace scripture as the medium through which the voice of God speaks, heals, and mends our broken and crushed spirits and makes us whole.

This new homiletic is a response to these factors but proclaims a whole person theology with an interpretation that speaks with a global voice. When an African-Immigrant preacher mounts the pulpit, she has an historical and biblical heritage from which to frame her theology. Her theology is also done through a global concern that deals with the immediacy of the whole person's urgent need.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

A host of literature on homiletics talks about whole gospel preaching or preaching the whole gospel. Their argument is based on faithfulness to scripture and preaching the gospel in its entirety. This is a unilateral movement in which the preacher proclaims scripture to the listener. In this case, the preacher recounts scripture based on his beliefs on the inerrancy of scripture and conveys it to the listeners without considering their needs and locations. This approach accounts for scripture but may not account for the listener.

The main thrust of whole gospel preaching is to present the gospel in all its entirety. However, whole person preaching asks how the preacher can connect the gospel to the needs of the listener. This is a collaborative method. It is not constrained by a single methodology. It is an eclectic approach to preaching. In Eslinger's terminology, it is a web— "a complex of theology."[1] It borrows from different homiletical principles; it picks and chooses from different approaches in order to reach the listener with an effective message. Whole person preaching is also akin to what Kenton Anderson describes as integrative preaching:

> the integrative model of preaching lays across two axes, the horizontal and the vertical, in a kind of the homiletic landscape. The horizontal (physical) axis overlays the vertical (spiritual) axis in the shape of the cross. As the sermon moves, it works by centripetal force to draw everything towards the center point. Head integrates with heart, and heaven comes in contact with the humans.[2]

The root word for integration is from the Latin "integrates," which means "to make whole." Whole person preaching is an attempt to assemble various preaching philosophies that address the whole person. Most importantly, whole preaching must first affect the whole person of the preacher

1. Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletical Methods* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 13.

2. Kenton C. Anderson, *Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 14.

before it affects the whole person of the listener. In the end the preacher exchanges the wholeness of the word within to the wholeness of the word to the listener.

To design whole preaching, the preacher should:

1. Assess context and content. She must decipher the urgent needs of her listeners so that she can provide a timely message. A careful observation of the messages of the prophets would reveal that they were able to deliver timely messages based on situations and needs.
2. Bring her Bible into every aspect of preparation and delivery. Scripture is the foundation upon which preaching is built. Without it the sermon is just mere entertainment or simply a speech.
3. Connect with the listener. She must connect the biblical world and the contemporary world. God and man are in an unending partnership. Even when the relationship is broken, God makes a way of redemption and reconciliation. The preacher's task is to join in and foster that partnership. Whole preaching in the end, would bring man and God in communion.
4. Develop sermons that are relevant to listeners' needs. A sermon is not a text; neither is it a static event. It is dynamic. It is a movement that brings the listener to various stages: listening, questioning, rejecting, introspecting and appropriating the message. The preacher should develop sermons that traverse these stages if it is to reach the whole person.
5. Evoke a sense of wonder of the word as well as educe a response from both pulpit and pew. Preaching should illuminate doubts and queries, unbelief and rejections and evoke a sense of wonder to both preacher and listener. Regardless of the result, preaching reveals a light through darkness, speech through silence, healing through hurt and victory through failure.

This is a monumental task, and it calls for borrowing and refining various approaches from several homileticians and theologians. Whole preaching is a bilateral undertaking in which scripture affects the preacher and the listener. In whole preaching the pendulum is swung both ways. The whole

word is a force in which pulpit and pew are affected. Thus resulting, in what Craddock defines as a "community and incarnate event."[3]

Craddock's homiletics is compatible with African spirituality because it creates a sense of communality. He puts preaching back into the narrative, which makes its harmonious with African spirituality. Narrative becomes the tool to encapsulate language and culture. By doing so he echoes the principle of Walter Ong who takes preaching from textuality to orality. "Written words are isolated from the fuller context in which spoken words came into being."[4] Craddock writes, "the universe grew silent with the development of a literal culture. The spoken word came to be regarded as a modification of the written word rather than vice versa."[5]

For the African preacher, this may appear as a fairy tale. Craddock has brought preaching back into African primal spirituality. Instead of moving the text straight to the listener, he takes the word to its originality, where it was first conceived in a primal culture. In this regard, whole person preaching reconnects written word with that of original orality. To embrace orality, Craddock suggests that a sermon must bear a narrative imprint. To bolster a narrative imprint, he argues that the preacher embraces orality and appropriate language. Language is the custodian of culture. "Language is the intimate, articulate expression of culture, and so close are the two that language can be said to commensurate with culture, which it suffuses and embodies."[6]

A language spoken takes the culture to its primal state and transports it along its contemporary expressions. By appropriating language, a preacher rides on the coat tails of culture and textuality.

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3. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 25. In this quote, Craddock refers to culture as literal.

4. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), 101.

5. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 10.

6. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on* Culture (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 3.

Craddock laments the fact that "no one can preach who has no respect for words."[7] Craddock, like Lowry and Buttrick, laments the outlining of sermons as well as the three-point sermons. A sermon is a narrative, a rapport between pulpit and pew. "Communication, like revelation must leave room for discovery."[8]

Narrative preaching in Craddock's world is a marriage between the preacher and listener because "language is indigenous to the situation."[9] It is a union between text, context and orality—the word that is proclaimed must be conceived between these media. The robust appeal of narrative preaching as Craddock states is that "those who hear are not just an audience; they are participants in the story."[10] With this assertion, one can have a clear understanding of whole preaching in the African-Immigrant context. When the sermon brings about such affection, then the distance between the historical and contemporary worlds is bridged. In this context, Craddock is expressing the sentiment of Lowry that "a sermon is an event in time."[11]

Craddock was responding to an anti-authoritarian culture. The age of Christendom and the dominance of Christianity has been dwarfed by other forces. He responds to an epoch in which the minister is stripped of his authority. However, African-Immigrants thrive in a culture that respects authority as well as being ambivalent towards authority. On one hand, it is a culture of veneration. On the other hand, it is lured and seduced by an anti-authoritarian culture. The preacher in an African-Immigrant setting is called to navigate both dispensations and frame a homiletic that deals with these challenges.

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7. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 7.

8. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 76.

9. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 104.

10. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 59.

11. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as a Narrative Art Form* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 8.

Craddock and Lowry alike make their case for preaching, that it should be in the narrative form. Craddock argues that a narrative has movement and employs imagination. Lowry argues that "preaching is story telling."[12] And he also says that a story has movement "as an event in time."[13] One would argue that narrative preaching forms the framework of whole preaching in the African-Immigrant setting. African culture is an oral culture in which stories persist and are retold from one generation to the other. This is a culture in which language is rife with idioms and adages. Adages codify cultural symbols. When they are spoken it brings to light the essence of the entire culture. When preaching takes the form of a narrative it places the listener back to their point of originality and prepares and helps them to identify with the message that is proclaimed.

As much as I applaud narrative preaching, it can bear its own poison. Like any menu, excessive indulgence in one ingredient might alter the ultimate flavor and taste. Narrative preaching is a significant part and parcel of whole person preaching. Whole preaching borrows significantly from narrativity. Nonetheless, there must be limitation with this approach. An African-Immigrant preacher who solely depends on narrative preaching might be limiting her ingenuity. She might also become myopic and reticent of the fact that she has a diverse audience as well as different types of listeners. A preacher, therefore, must adopt an eclectic preaching methodology. A one-sided approach might eclipse the appeal of the sermon as well as the interest of the listeners. Nonetheless, narrative preaching is intrinsic to African folklore.

Lowry's "Homiletical Plot" is paradigmatic for preaching in the African-Immigrant context. His sermonic methods align very well in the African-Immigrant context and his approach echoes the African-Immigrant paradigm. He demonstrates impeccably how to construct a sermon and leads his readers systematically through the homiletical process. His method considers the complexities of the African

12. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 12.

13. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 26.

listener's experience, his cultural orientation, his world, and his diverse immigrant environment. Lowry writes, "a sermon is not a logical assemblage; a sermon is an event in time which follows the logic born of communication interaction between the preacher and congregation."[14]

Lowry gives us a sermonic trajectory which would guide every preacher within this context to craft a sagacious, relevant, and inspiring sermon. His five-stage sermonic development goes as follows:

1. Upsetting the equilibrium.
2. Analyzing the discrepancy.
3. Disclosing the resolution.
4. Experiencing the gospel.
5. Anticipating the consequences.

This five-step process puts both the listener and scripture in a crucible. The preacher and listener must confront each other to evaluate their backgrounds and projections. The scripture is a product of test of time and the listener is a person in the process of test of time. Both are in a crucible of the test-of-time continuum, and the evaluation and trustworthiness of text, message, and messenger. Consciously and sub-consciously African-Immigrants are in the constant process of upsetting the equilibrium. They travel abroad because of the upheavals at home. In the diaspora and for reasons of survival, they are in the battle to upset the equilibrium.

For example, African-Immigrants with advanced university degrees will upend their status-quo and take menial jobs. They would enter employments that they would have never entertained or felt connected to, and lifestyles that they could not have embraced. These noble professions in which they were trained are not easily available to them. In addition, many are rendered powerless to overcome some of the red tape imposed on them. This leaves them with alternative jobs that are not rife with discrimination and rejection. Some of these professions provide an appealing compensation and allow

14. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 8.

them to assume a modicum of respectability that they would otherwise have in their homeland. This construct helps them to adjust to the reality of life in the diaspora. It is a paradigm of constantly upsetting the equilibrium. They "turn their world upside down," (Acts 17:6–KJV) so that they can understand it and navigate through its complex and difficult terrain. To understand and acclimate to their environment, they embark on this process. As immigrants deliberately upset their equilibrium, the preacher will serve her listeners best if she frames her preaching using this construct. Thus, she creates a tension in which preacher and listener engage in the same process. Preaching, therefore in this context, would serve the listener well, if its upsets the equilibrium and, tests the validity of every frame of reference—be it scriptural, theological or traditional.

Lowry's methodology asks the preacher to become rigorous, instead of being a passive participant in sermon preparation, and allowing unproven ideas to dominate the preacher's psyche. Lowry calls the preacher to implement his diagnostic tools to upset the equilibrium and analyze the discrepancies. The preacher must engage scripture and context in a deliberate, rigorous, and meticulous analysis. Having done so, the preacher will be placed in a trajectory and at the core of sermonic development. This will set the foundation for whole preaching. "The sermonic idea emerges at the intersection point between problems and solution, between human predicament and the particularity of the gospel, between 'itch' and 'scratch.'"[15]

In analyzing the discrepancies within the text, the preacher must deal with the various competing factors in the sermon. These factors are what he refers to as ambiguity. Lowry argues that "the central task of any sermon, therefore, is the resolution of that particular central ambiguity."[16] African-Immigrants are living a life of discrepancies and ambivalence. They swing the pendulum between the old culture and the new culture. They parallel in many ways, like counselees who visit the

15. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 119.

16. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 31.

office of their therapist seeking clues to resolution, and being uncertain of which decision to make. The preacher must deal with the discrepancies and not avoid or circumvent them. By intentionally dealing with discrepancies, the listener equally engages in the same process. This eventually puts preacher and listener in sync throughout the sermon.

African-Immigrants are living in tension between cultures and the preacher must employ this tool. Because the goal of preaching is to elicit change in our listener, the preacher must fully engage in dealing with discrepancies. The listener will not effect change until he understands and deals with discrepancies. African-Immigrants wrestle with religious pluralism and a host of other factors. The sermon must acknowledge the resistance of the listener and their ambivalence, and sometimes "roll along with the resistance"[17] before attempting resolution. For example, one can argue that Paul's sermon in Acts 17: 22-33, in which the Athenians erected an altar "to an unknown God," was a case of rolling with resistance. Paul rolled along with their assumptions and redirected them to the true God of creation. By doing so, he was able to be in sync with his listeners. Most importantly, he revealed the clue to resolution and resolved their inquiries. In this way, he entered their world, and they entered his. It was whole person (preacher) meeting whole person (listener), especially those who became followers of Paul and believed (Acts 17:34).

This methodology is an effective way to reach Africans who tussle between religious pluralism and a plethora of social and economic issues. Furthermore, the African-Immigrant experience is in a conundrum and a culture of displacement. They are continually in distress with economic, domestic, political, and social upheavals. The preacher should understand and acknowledge their struggles and the sermon should lay a path forward from all obstacles they face.

17. This is a concept I borrowed from motivational interviewing—a counseling methodology developed by clinical psychologists William R. Miller and later developed by Stephen Rollnick. It is a client-centered intervention used to evoke behavior change.

In analyzing the discrepancies in this context, the preacher now finds herself in the immigrant's world of ambiguity. A preacher who wrestles with scripture and ruffles the experiences of displacement begins to win the attention of the listener. Listeners want to understand the discrepancies in their world and want to dissect it properly to get solvency. A preacher who analyses discrepancies achieves the advantage and builds fluidity to move to the next stage of "disclosing the clue to resolution." If this pattern is followed, the preacher will have secured the listener's attention and trust as well as create a sacred, shared, and appealing space where the gospel is preached effectively. The gospel is never experienced or celebrated if it is not an event in time. It must engage the worlds of culture, text, and experience.

Narrative preaching enables the preacher to present materials through artistic and creative lenses. The preacher who adopts narrative preaching creates a platform to ask questions, and to scrutinize problematic matters by allowing his personality to shine through the sermon. This method allows the preacher to adopt alternative methods to dissect, diagnose, and examine issues within the sermon. When the listener observes that the preacher is methodically addressing critical issues, he will sit upright, and pay close attention to the sermon. This becomes a win-win situation because preacher and listener will ride on the same wavelength. Narrative preaching has the advantage of creating significant aural and oral engagement of the listener. It enables the preacher to reach inner dimensions of the listener, which is the goal of preaching to the whole person.

Lowry describes this sermonic process as a plot from "an itch to a scratch: an oops, ugh, aha, whee, and yeah."[18] These five steps take the listener through every facet of the sermonic journey. Furthermore, this process stirs an affection and reception of the sermon in both the preacher and listener. This is so because preaching to the whole person requires whole-hearted engagement from both preacher and listener.

18. Lowry, *Homiletical Plot,* 26.

Lowry's methodology is very paradigmatic of preaching in an African-Immigrant context. However, I would introduce a step before "upsetting the equilibrium." In the African-Immigrant context, the gospel must be "experienced in its pristine form" before "upsetting the equilibrium." The preacher must first immerse himself within the pristine setting, create a tension as he proclaims the gospel and then upset the equilibrium. This would eventually lead to the celebration of the gospel. My understanding of the gospel in its pristine form agrees with Kwame Bediako's concept of African gospel in its primal form and spirituality.[19] Why upset an equilibrium before the gospel is experienced in its pristine and primal form? In preaching to the African-Immigrant, the preacher must understand and establish himself within the context of the listener and text before upsetting the gospel.

Henry Mitchell builds on Lowry's fourth and fifth principles— "experiencing the gospel and anticipating the consequences." Lowry's colloquialism of "whee and yeah," signifies the celebration of the preached word. Mitchel's trajectory of the preaching leads to the celebration of the gospel. While each prescribed different routes, their outcomes appear to be the same. Lowry propounded that the preacher should "upset the equilibrium" but his orbit leads to celebration.

Mitchell's homiletics is built on four cardinal points: the culture of the congregation, the current needs of the listener, the language of the congregation and the celebrative theme of preaching. His fundamental approach begins with the preacher's understanding of the culture of the congregation. He argues that preaching must begin with proper understanding of the culture of the listener. "Black preaching is conditioned by sociological, economics, government, culture – the ethos of the Black community."[20]

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19. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 92, 227.

20. Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 123.

Mitchell is in the company of his disciple Frank Thomas who articulated this view: "The preacher is a 'flag-bearer' for the old longing … it is through cultural language and memory that the being of a historical people is made concrete to the world."[21]

Mitchell and Thomas buttress the sentiment of Bediako that primal spirituality and culture is the bridge to preach effectively to the listener. Culture is the place to begin to understand and frame the identity of the listener. Because preaching is always contextual, any form of preaching which disregards culture will not attract the listener.

In his second cardinal point, Mitchell argues that preaching must be designed to meet the current needs of the congregation. On this point, Mitchell is joined by Harry Emerson Fosdick who articulated that preaching must address people's needs and solve their problems. "People come to church on Sunday with every kind of personal difficulty and problems … a sermon was meant to meet such needs; it should be personal counseling on a group scale."[22]

On the theme of language, Mitchell is joined by a chorus of voices such as Craddock and Gardner C. Taylor who propounded that the effectiveness of the sermon rests on the effective use of language. Mitchell claims that "Preaching is carried out in idioms, imagery, style and world view of a particular people."[23]

Mitchell's lasting mark on preaching is on the theme of celebration. He argues that the task of preaching is to transport and translate the message of the gospel into a celebration. "Celebration dramatizes the main idea of the sermon and supports the behavioral purpose or motivational goal. The function could be called 'ecstatic reinforcement.' People relate to and remember what they celebrate,

21. Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 78.

22. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Art of Preaching* (Springfield; IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1971), 13.

23. Mitchell, *Black Preaching,* 11.

and it influences their behavior."[24] The motif of celebration brings African-American preaching on par with African preaching. African preaching owes its origin to the Griot culture which is built on musicality and celebration.[25] In the African-Immigrant congregation, there is a radical shift to praise and worship. The reason for this is that most listeners view preaching as dry doctrinal proclamation devoid of celebration and musicality. This, then, is the conundrum in African-Immigrant context. They have an inclination for praise and worship (which is celebration) and have an ambivalence towards preaching, yet they still search for preaching that incorporates celebration.

However, the African-Immigrant congregation is not monolithic. It is a pluralistic culture made of a variety of listeners. While some embrace celebration, others have different orientations. I agree with Mitchell that the gospel must be translated into celebration. African-Immigrants are in such a displaced environment that the gospel provides an outlet for celebration if proclaimed effectively. Nonetheless, here are the dangers. Celebration, if not tamed, can spiral into chaos. Most importantly, celebration that is not defined biblically can create a culture of entertainment. While preaching must uphold celebration on one hand, it must firmly acknowledge that its purposes are for education, edification, sanctification and the salvation of souls on the other hand. Nonetheless, Mitchell's paradigm provides a strong foundation for African-Immigrant proclamation.

Celebration has always been the conduit through which Africans interpret their struggles and victories. During problems, wars and the end of atrocities, they lash out in songs of celebration. Celebration for them is not necessarily entertainment; it is a recognition of their resiliency, fortitude and hope. And, being constantly crushed by forces which reduce their status-quo sometimes as non-humans, celebration is the vehicle to restore their hope and personhood. Whole preaching to African-

24. Mitchell, *Black Preaching,* 120-121.

25. Griots are known as Yelibas in the Madingo culture. The Yelibas (men) and the Yelimusu's (female praise singers) are poets, story tellers and musicians who are custodians of West African oral culture.

Immigrants must infuse this approach so that it can minister to the whole person. This approach reminds the listener of their strength, their courage and tenacity. Celebration in this context is not worldly entertainment; it is a sacred task of restoring a person to the full capacity that God intended them to be. In the end, they realize that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

Evans Crawford amplifies and fleshes out Mitchell's theme of celebration in a context that is indigenous to African-Immigrants. Crawford's literature describes African-American listeners' response to preaching as "the hum and call response." In Crawford's "hum and call response," African-Americans might be expressive and vocal in their response to the sermon. However, Africans and African-Immigrants response to preaching might range from docility, to appreciative, speculative, assimilative, and celebrative. Because of the diversity of African-Immigrant listeners, their response might be varied. Although a limited number of listeners can be expressive and vocal, one cannot paint a broad brush of all African-Immigrants with this approach. Nonetheless, some African-American congregations appear to have moved away from the expressive call and response.

Crawford's argument is based on the bifurcation of preaching, the musicality of preaching and communal response. He describes this process as "variety of biformations."[26] The "preacher's homiletical musicality" is done in collaboration with the communal response.[27] In making the case for the "preacher's musicality," Crawford writes that "[preaching] uses time, pause, inflection, pace, and other musical qualities of speech to engage all that the listener is in the act of proclaiming."[28] He supported his argument on communal engagement when he argues that, "while only one person had

26. Evans E. Crawford, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 22.

27. Crawford, *Hum,* 16.

28. Crawford, *Hum,* 16.

the title 'preacher,' in truth it was the entire church preaching."[29] And to further buttress his homiletical theory, he stated that "preaching is truth through particularity of the hum thought that moves between preaching and congregation as they affirm and celebrate the gospel."[30]

Crawford relayed five stages of delivery.

1. "Help 'em' Lord"—the search for connections. At this stage, the preacher must match content and context with the needs of the listener. The listener, on the other hand, is sizing up the preacher and evaluating how the message relates to them.
2. "Well"—at this stage, the preacher is "hinting on the witness" of the word with a "chantable refrain." In this communal musicality, the listener is in the inquiry stage and asking, "how does this matter to me?"
3. "That's all right"—This is when the preacher begins to make connections with the listener. The preacher must present the whole frame and truth of the gospel as it relates to the world of the scripture and the world of the listener. At this stage, the sermon is becoming effective and both preacher and listener begin to grapple with the truth.
4. "Amen"— "The truth is affirmed, and the pitch is right for the people and the scripture passage." Crawford writes that "the way sermons are heard and the oral response they awaken in listeners, who in turn are heard by the preacher and one another."[31]
5. "Glory Hallelujah"— "this is the point of highest praise, highest joy and praise to God."

Preaching is indeed music and a rapport between the preacher and the listener. While the preacher melodizes the truth of scripture to the listener, the listener sings their response of comfort and discomfort. Crawford conveyed three dynamics of this process: "antiphonically, polyphonically and

29. Crawford, *Hum,* 56.

30. Crawford, *Hum,* 60.

31. Crawford, *Hum,* 17.

symphonically." "The preacher seeks to 'sound' the word so that people not only 'hear' it but also see it … the development of the hum thought is a process that leads to moral consequences for the congregation by engaging the beholder's eye and ear in ways that awaken ethical capacity."[32]

Crawford appears to be cautious with preaching that is limited to the head, but appeals for preaching that he describes as "the cerebration of the head with the celebrative urges of the heart."[33] He also appeals for an integrative approach that "blends the contemplative to the celebrative."[34]

I totally agree with Crawford that preaching is musicality. However, before one can reach the eye and ears and emotions, the preacher must do a diligent work in reaching the reasoning capabilities of the listener. "Come now and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18—KJV). The preacher in his thinking faculty must first engage the cognitive abilities of the listener. To override the logical capability of the listener would rob the sermon of its persuasive tension and apprehension. Most importantly, if a sermon bypasses the reasoning dimension it might give place to an excess of emotionalism. To do justice to preaching, the musicality of preaching must be cranial as well as emotional. It is true that good music does stimulate thinking and affection.

Crawford's theory hinges on delivery and was not designed as a book on hermeneutics or theology. However, his method helps the reader understand how to preach a whole message to a whole person. By engaging ears and eyes, the preacher engages the intellectual, emotional and spiritual faculties of the listener. When language faces its deficit of articulating a thought or an idea, music transcends the call and whispers meaning to our consciousness. It is true that music speaks to the intellect as well as the emotions and this is whole preaching. Eslinger writes, "preaching, if it is to appeal

32. Crawford, *Hum,* 52-53.

33. Crawford, *Hum,* 22.

34. Crawford, *Hum,* 20.

to the whole person, must appeal to both the conscious and the subconscious, the emotive and intuitive as well as the rational."[35]

Crawford's contribution to whole person preaching is phenomenal. Music is both an intellectual and emotional exercise. Music stimulates the mind as well as the soul. The power of music is to reach the whole person. "The sound of music penetrates the whole of our being."[36] More importantly, music is the vehicle to celebrate person, thing or event. Whole preaching brings both the speaker and hearer of the word to an act of praise and worship. Music enables the celebration of pulpit and pew and creates a sacred and sacrosanct ambient for the worship of God.

In his work on Gardner Taylor, Jared Alcántara gives us the particularities of musicality. "Musicality is considered to be the ability to handle the qualitative aspects of musical communication, in the sense that beyond the use of conventional musical language it expresses the underlying levels of our spirit, of our innermost self."[37] The preaching of Gardner Taylor illustrates the work of musicality. A musician can work within a framework but can also veer and venture outside the norm. The musician can take risks as well as retreat and reestablish himself within conventional standards. Whole preaching is a methodology that operates within and outside prescribed conventions.

Alcántara describes Gardner C. Taylor's preaching as

> "Crossover homiletics"—that effectively deploys performance and metaphorical improvisational-as-intercultural-negotiation. This approach constitutes an alternative way of thinking about preaching practice and homiletical strategy with a specific aim in mind: to foster dispositional commitment to improvisational-intercultural proficiency as a way of being and acting. [38]

35. Richard L. Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletical Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 40.

36. Daniel Gilbert Perret and Colwyn Trevathen, *Root of Musicality: Music Therapy and Personal Development* (London: Jessica Kinsley Publishers, 2005), 8.

37. Jared E. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 28.

38. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 28.

Improvisational preaching adopts speech act theory, musical principles as well as basic techniques of drama. Crossover homiletics is built on five dynamics of improvisation: performance, metaphorical interpretation of scripture, intercultural engagement with the listener, and strategic homiletical principles. Improvisation is the playfulness and the risk taking which the preacher brings into proclaiming the word of God. The metaphorical is the preacher's ability to "draw from a repertoire of stored materials like jazz musicians and improvisateurs in the theatre."[39] "Taylor uses metaphor; the figurative language functions to turn the reader/listener away from the original meaning … Taylor is using individual tropes, the repetition of the phrase itself suggests that he is also 'troping.'"[40] Alcántara defines "intercultural competencies as the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and habits for effectively negotiating cultural, racial, and ecclesial difference."[41]

When a preacher can respond intuitively and think spontaneously, he will be able to formulate strategic homiletical principles that are sound and suitable to every context. Cleophus J. LaRue writes: "spontaneity is central to the folk preacher's style, and the appearance of spontaneity is central to the intellectual preachers even though they have crafted their oration to the word in pen and ink."[42] Alcantara uses the acronym "LEAD" (listen, engage, assess and decenter) to define Taylor's homiletical strategy. Whole preaching is similarly built on the same principles: to listen, to engage, to assess and to deliver. I prefer the word deliver, instead of "decenter," because the preaching of the word requires an urgency and strength of delivery. After diligent assessment and careful listening, the preacher should engage the listener and deliver a timely and pertinent sermon.

39. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 136.

40. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 130.

41. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 136.

42. Cleophus J. LaRue, *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 86.

Gardner's Taylor's preaching is built on the following principles:

1. His respect for the listener.
2. His respect for the use of language.
3. "His commitment for transgressing boundaries of racial, cultural and ecclesial difference."[43]
4. His love for people and his empathy to those who are suffering.
5. His observation that preachers are great listeners and "coparticipants and collaborators in the sermon."[44]

Before anyone can attempt crossover preaching, they must first learn the rudimentary principles of homiletics. No one can cross over without knowing where they are coming from. The biblical principles of homiletics are a birthright for anyone who wants to preach. It warrants that all neophytes, as well as seasoned preachers constantly learn and re-learn the biblical foundation of preaching. All biblical exposition must stand on the legs of rigorous exegesis and meticulous study of biblical content (concepts and context), proven and honest hermeneutics and an absolute reliance on the Holy Spirit, who is the perfect interpreter of the scripture.

If these criteria are not met, improvisational preaching is impossible. Scripture serves as a scaffold and a swing stage from which the preacher can take risk into crossover preaching. Without a solid scriptural foundation, crossover preaching ventures into risky territories from which there is no return. This dead-end road would morph as entertainment clothed in a fad which disguises itself as preaching. Nonetheless, improvisational preaching brings an interesting dimension that appeals to the listeners and can reach the whole person. When the listener notices the preacher's varied and rigorous attempt to reach him, he may be persuaded. In exchange, he settles down and gives audience to the

43. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 136.

44. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching,* 251.

preacher but engages with an internal dialogue. This means that the word has penetrated the listener even to his whole being.

As the name suggests, "crossover preaching" must vacillate between content and context and between preacher and listener. Scripture, we may attest, is divine drama on an eternal scale. Any effective preaching must improvise ways to enter the scene and be a participant in this divine drama. The Bible is God acting on a grand scale to reach humanity. It is also humanity in drama as they respond to the protagonist. The preacher is the interlocutor on this dramatic scene to render an effective word to the listener. Garner C. Taylor discovered the biblical principle of incarnation where heaven interrupts earth and lives out this message that is proven true for all ages. The same principle of transgressing boundaries is another form of the Word incarnate in our dimension. In preaching to the whole person, the preacher must find ways to circumvent any defense that the listener erects. The preacher should also improvise ways to get beyond the mask the listener wears. Listeners are not just going to receive the word easily. Humans are by nature defensive and they may erect barriers to receiving the word. The task of whole preaching is to assess these probabilities and improvise ways to reach the whole person. First, the preacher must identify these obstacles and then look for the soft spots and precisely deliver the word. To identify these obstacles, the preacher should understand the cultural world of the listener.

Matthew Kim, in his book *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons,* provides tools of personal and cultural assessment. He writes, "to embrace our varied listeners means that we take into account their point of view, their interpretation, their theology, their very existence."[45] He gave five lenses through which we can understand our listeners: location, gender, ethnicity, religion and denomination. When a preacher can assess these frameworks, it will give

45. Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 89.

him a perception of the listener. Most importantly, it will give him an understanding of how to design and deliver effective sermons.

To understand the listener, Matthew Kim demonstrates how the pendulum has swung from intelligence quotient (IQ) to emotional intelligence (EQ) and now, to cultural intelligence (CQ). The movement of culture has always been fluid and continues to change in this dynamic sequence.

To understand culture, one must understand and interpret it in the trajectory of change and evolution of society. A world that is rapidly evolving can be understood in terms of its cultural nuances. This is not to minimize the particularities of intelligence quotient and not to dismiss the importance of emotional intelligence. All these concepts could not stand on their own without being integrated into the subtleties of cultural intelligence. IQ and EQ are redundant in interpreting our evolving and pluralistic society. To acquire a wholistic understanding of a shifting and multiethnic culture, one must appropriate these three concepts.

Kim attributes the term "Cultural Intelligence" (CQ) to business professors Christopher Earley and Soon Ang in their book *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures.* Their work is based on the pluralistic society and diverse workplace of our contemporary world.

Kim discovered that this is a similar landscape to that of the early church in the book of Acts. He argues that, the church in Acts set a blueprint two thousand years ago for how our modern church can operate in similar environments. The challenge is now laid at the feet of modern preachers who are called to define and analyze present day society. It is incumbent upon the modern church to replicate the principles of the early church and apply them to our present setting. The cultural shift that the church continues to experience appears to be cyclical and not linear.

For many centuries, the church has operated within a monolithic concept. The domination of Western Christianity led the church to an entrapment of Christendom, which was a Euro-centric approach. From the inception of the church, it has operated as a movement and has been sensitive and

responsive to the cultural changes that it encroaches. From its Jewish heritages to Gentile heritage, the church has always been successful in operating within cultural fluidity.

Preaching with cultural intelligence requires the preacher to appropriate the culture of the Bible and to understand the modern cultural trends. With these tools the preacher can approach scripture judiciously. Jesus, who was a product of culture, learned and immersed himself within the culture of his day. The modern preacher is called to do likewise. Preaching in this multi-cultural environment calls for the preacher to be a student of culture. As a preacher, the utmost responsibility is to learn and decipher "delicate balance between listening and speaking." She must listen to the nuance of any given culture and speak with sensitivity and respect of others. The preacher must bring a "wholistic understanding of culture." She must be able to embrace and express the symbols that culture intends to convey.

If the designation of this era as post-Christian is true, the challenges of preaching today far outweigh those of yesteryears. Our present era requires a different yardstick from those of our predecessors. Whereas, they may have ministered in an age where authority was taken for granted, we minister in a landscape where authority is challenged and even lampooned. When a contemporary preacher mounts the pulpit, both preacher and audience engage in inquiry of each other. As the preacher interprets the listener, the listener is equally engaged in the same process. By this I mean that the listener knows if the preacher has travelled their world and experiences and if she understands them. This is the nature of the era in which we are now called to preach, if we understand the people who hear our sermons. Cultural Intelligence indeed fine-tunes whole person preaching.

Throughout the book, Kim returns to the refrain, "the culturally intelligent preacher finds opportunities to balance stereotypical."[46] "The culturally intelligent preacher incorporates both

46. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 147.

individual and relational application."[47] This is just to name a few references. This is a pedagogical tool to help the preacher understand and imbibe cultural intelligence.

In helping the reader develop cultural intelligence, Kim outlines three principles: HABIT, BRIDGE, and DIALECT. He uses these words as acronyms.

In HABIT: the preacher must understand the historical context, the authorial intent, the big idea of the text in order to interpret the context and come to a theological conclusion.

In BRIDGE: the preacher must know the beliefs of her listener, know their rituals, identify their idols, relate to their dreams, understand their concept of God and relate to their experience.

In DIALECT: the preacher must understand the appropriate method of sermon delivery, use of proper and sensitive illustration, be precise with sermonic application, use pertinent language, embrace the listener, use relevant content and demonstrate trust. These three principles (Habit, Bridge, and Dialect) with eighteen other steps, will help the "pastors [preachers] as bridgers of culture."[48]

These dynamic principles will not only help the preacher acquire and develop cultural intelligence, but will create a bond and proclivity with those who hear their sermons. This literature lays out the steppingstones for preaching in the African-Immigrant setting. Kim laid down the salient point of culture and context when he wrote, "only when the listeners become familiar with biblical cultures can they make sense of how God's word has impact on their cultural context."[49]

Other significant elements such as tradition and immigration, that really define the uniqueness of the African-Immigrant church, were out of reach in this book. However, Kim's work is diagnostic in nature. He leads the reader systematically in how to diagnose a culture and assess the listener. The

47. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 150.

48. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 8.

49. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 38.

process of assessment and diagnosis is an integral part of preaching to the whole person in the African-Immigrant context.

Walter Brueggemann in his book, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles,* takes the diagnostic task a little further. He outlines a biblical view of the exile experience, and as well, provides his readers with great diagnostic tools to analyze displacement. He writes, "the Bible is an artistic, rhetorical proposal that seeks to persuade (convert) to an alternative sense of God, world, neighbor, and self."[50]

In defining exile, Brueggemann writes, "exile is an act of being orphaned, and many folks now sense themselves in that status."[51] This elaborate literature on exile is truly a gem in understanding whole person preaching, especially in the African-Immigrant context. This biblical and almost clinical assessment of exile experience helps the preacher develop an empathetic disposition for preaching, which is essential for preaching to the whole person.

Brueggemann gives the following description of exile:

1. Exile is a sense of loss. It is a nostalgia, a lament, a mourning for what was lost, what could have been and what could be. This is loss wrapped in resentment, sadness and despair.
2. Exile is a state of displacement. A loss of geographical space. A loss of identity. It is a community in abject poverty and loss of emotional bonds. Exiles are displaced community in departure as well as in arrival. They are in a state of total loss: orphans, widows and aliens. These formed the tripartite of those needing redemption in the Old Testament. "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widows, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:18).

50. Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 12.

51. Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home,* 5.

3. Exile is a loss of faith. It is a loss of dreams, opportunities, vocation and well-being. The exile's poverty, rejection and displacement test their faith in God.
4. Exile is a place of rejection, retribution and condemnation. Immigrants thrive in an ambience of contradictions. While they are welcome on one hand, on the other hand, they are shamed and accused of bringing anomalies to their host nations. They are viewed as those needing help, but are held in contempt and suspicion as those who would squander and usurp opportunities from natives.
5. Exile is a loss of orientation. Displacement causes a loss of focus and shifts the individual and the community into a mode of survival. A culture of survival breeds individualism, pragmatism and moral decadence. Survival may translate to denigration of values. Persons might find themselves in unfamiliar terrain because of the need for survival.

Brueggemann delineates a thorough biblical framework of displacement and provides the reader with diagnostic tools to understand the theme of exile. He attempts to link displacement to contemporary culture but does not incorporate the complexities of globalization. He argues that the cyclical patterns of oppression breed a continuum of displacement. As a biblical scholar, he is entrenched in the biblical symptoms of displacement and does not deal with all the social and political intricacies of contemporary culture. This continuum leads to brokenness.

He categorizes brokenness as shame, checkered past, scandal and rejection. He defines wholeness as healing, deliverance, progress, and restoration. He contributes immensely to whole person preaching in African-Immigrant context by advocating a strategy that is geared towards restoring listeners' identity, sense of pride and character. "Preaching a biblical text among … exiles is precisely a practice of density that is essential to the maintenance of identity and crucial for missional freedom and vocational energy amidst an indifferent or hostile hegemony."[52]

52. Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home,* 74.

Brueggemann's biblical diagnosis of displacement is crucial to whole preaching in the African-Immigrant context. He outlines the prominent points in assessing any exile community. The main thrust of whole preaching is to assess person and context. Furthermore, he outlines the monumental task the preacher would face in planning to preach in an environment that deals with tensions, contradictions and ambivalence. He argues that the preacher juxtaposed text with counter text, content with counter content, script with counter script—cultural discourse … and change in perception.[53]

Whereas Brueggemann gives a biblical but generalized view of exiles and displacement, Kwame Bediako provides a particularized diagnosis of Africans and African Christianity. He based his argument on the following hypothesis. His first proposition is that Christianity has a primal root in Africa even before European expansion—that the roots of African Christianity were established after the fall of Jerusalem, and African primal spirituality was the foundation upon which the seeds of Christianity were sown. He argues that the identity and personality of Africa served as a fertile ground for the inception and reception of the gospel.[54]

Secondly, he propounded that Africans were receptive to the gospel amidst and despite European abuse and slave trade. To buttress this argument, he stated that Christianity was appealing to Africa because of these three factors: indigenization of the gospel, translatability of the gospel and Africanization of Christianity.

Thirdly, he promulgated that African identity was formed through a similar pluralistic context as that of the Apostolic church. The Apostolic church was planted and grew in a diverse culture, and African Christianity is formed in the mix of traditional religion, Islam, religious indifference, the lure of

53. Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home,* 32-36.

54. See Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*.

materialism, and social, economic and political upheavals. Drawing upon theologian, John Mbiti, Bediako agrees that: "the Christian way of life is in Africa to stay, certainly for the foreseeable future.[55]

Bediako was able to debunk the assumption that Christianity was inimical to Africa. Africans, after all, are equal partners of the faith. In addition, he made an indentation in the fallacy that Christianity is a "Western religion." African Christianity in its primal state and spirituality is what scripture refers to as "eternity set in our heart;" "moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into our minds, yet they cannot find what God has done from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). He goes on to assert that: "African Traditional religion has been serious preparation for the gospel in Africa and forms the major religious substratum for the idiom and existential experience of Christianity in African life."[56]

Bediako sets out to prove that if Africa becomes the center of gravity for present Christianity it's because of the preparation laid down since its very foundation. The foothold of the faith owes its gratitude to primal spirituality and the mores which are the fertile soil for the gospel. This cogent argument would make the man of Africa rise and embrace the gospel more than even before and proclaim this faith as his identity and personality. Bediako's aim was to prove that Christianity is to Africa what the gospel was to Palestine. As a theologian, his tasks are both apologetics and his defense of Africa's primal spirituality.

However, he also acknowledged the impactful contributions of western missionary enterprise. African theology is not built exclusively on African primal spirituality; it is also a translatable faith with Hebrew, Greek, Latin and European contributions. The African became a recipient and beneficiary of a diverse and pluralistic faith and theology. This gives the African preacher a platform of diversity and an

55. John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 229.

56. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 82-83.

advantage to proclaim the gospel not primarily as a "Galilean tongue" or an African orientation, but with a globalized accent.

Bediako successfully points out African identity and personality—that Christianity is not alien to Africa. With regards to African identity, Bediako writes: "it was therefore misguided to assume that African converts to Christianity assimilated the missionary message in Western terms rather than in terms of their own African religious understanding and background."[57] To buttress this argument, Parratt writes, "theology throughout Africa finds its common ground in three basic elements—in the Bible and Christian tradition, in African culture and religion, and in the contemporary sociopolitical situation."[58]

In pinpointing African personality, Bediako writes that "translatability … produces indigeneity."[59] "The problem in Africa might be too much religion, not too little."[60] In diagnosing African identity and personality, Bediako takes the preacher to the rudimentary aspect of whole preaching in the African-Immigrant context, which is knowing the listener. Having done so, he advocates a method of preaching that addresses the whole person. "The gospel is essentially holistic and directed at the whole person—physical as well as spiritual, corporate as well as individual—and therefore requires a corresponding holistic missionary engagement."[61]

In diagnosing African identity, John Mbiti argues that religion is indigenous to Africa and "Africans are notoriously religious."[62] "Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious

57. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 119.

58. John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 27.

59. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 122.

60. Sanneh, *Translating the Message,* 193.

61. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa,* 129.

62. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1969), 2.

being. It is this that makes African so religious: religion is in their whole system of being."[63] He laments the fact that African religious interpretations came through the biases and limitations of anthropology and sociology. Furthermore, because Africans did not promulgate and document their religious character, foreign theological assumptions about them were misguided. While recognizing missionary activities to Africa, Mbiti understood mission as a collaborative effort between the foreign and the domestic. He makes the argument that mission with all its intent and purpose came with biases and mistakes. In disseminating the gospel, it also propagated its cultural identity:

> Christianity from Western Europe and North America has come to Africa not simply carrying the gospel of the New Testament, but as a complex, politics, science, technology, medicine, schools and new methods of conquering nature. The gospel by its very nature is revolutionary; but Christianity in its modest return to Africa is the main carrier of all the elements of this world revolution. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the Gospel and Christianity which are not synonymous at certain points.[64]

In rectifying the mistakes of the past and dealing with future challenges of Christianity, Mbiti argues that both nationals and foreign mission must engage in a collaborative effort to offset these unintended consequences.

Mbiti makes the argument that African religion is older than Christianity and Islam. He delineated three aspects of African religion

1. The redemptive character of African religion. African religion shares the same characteristics as Christianity, Judaism and Islam.
2. The moralistic character of African religion. Mbiti compares African religious morality to Shintoism and Confucian.

63. Mbiti, *African Religions,* 3.

64. Mbiti, *African Religions,* 212.

3. The primitive aspect of African religion. A misinterpretation on the social scientists' depiction of Africans as savages, lacking in imagination and emotion and with the lack of emphasis on the pristine peculiarities of African religion.

Mbiti drew out African anthropocentric ontology from these three classifications. Within these categories, Mbiti identifies these similarities with Christianity. African religion is in sync with doctrines of Christianity: belief in God as a spirit—omniscient, omnipotent and omniscient. The belief in the moral attributes of God: "the God of pity (compassion); God is kind and merciful."[65] African religion, Mbiti argues, espouses belief in the God of creation and that his creation is his act of miracle, mystery and justice.

Mbiti contends that African religion and society is the victim of colonialism which results in the oppression of African political structure, economic suppression imposed from within and without, the prevailing mechanisms of poverty and the continued onslaught of diseases. These factors continue to haunt African religion and consciousness. These forces, Mbiti contends, gave birth to another African identity: the diaspora. They are akin to exiles who "sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they sang the Lord's song" (Psalm 137). In assessing their depressing situation, Mbiti writes; "Christianity must occupy the whole person."[66]

Christianity must occupy the person as well as the culture because African plurality comes as a mixed blessing. This plurality both enriches and supplants the African religious character. However, there are vices that are deeply entrenched in this cultural nuance that also mar its character. For example, tribalism and sectionalism are catastrophic to African morality. These vices create social malaise, polarize political climate and places countless burdens and yokes on the necks of its people. This generates challenges that stifle their identity, and the gospel must occupy culture and person.

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65. Mbiti, *African Religions*, 36.

66. Mbiti, *African Religions,* 3.

There are many changes that are altering African identity: political economy, monetary economy, urbanization, secularization, technological change, cultural change, international relations and climate change. To deal with these challenges, Mbiti sounds the trumpet call. He admonishes Africans to reflect on African Christian institutions that were established in North Africa, Egypt, parts of Sudan and Ethiopia and to mentors of the past (Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine), and for them to begin to assume their rightful place. "The man of Africa must get up and dance, for better or worse on the arena of world drama. His image of himself and of the universe is disrupted and must make room for the changing 'universe' and not simply the 'tribal' man."[67] This can be done in collaboration with missionaries who sacrificed their lives in propagating the gospel in Africa. With the speed of change, both nationals and their foreign counterparts can collaborate their efforts to this ambience of globalization.

This is a comprehensive study of African religion and philosophy. Mbiti covered the critical areas affecting African religion: tradition, culture, socioeconomics, African plurality, politics and diaspora. These are issues that the preacher must understand and wrestle with, in order to preach the gospel effectively to the whole person in the African-Immigrant context. Mbiti lays a great foundation in which the preacher can understand the background and plights of Africans. He advocates that "Christianity must occupy the whole person"[68] and to do so, the preacher must understand their world.

This literature is the starting point to understand whole preaching in the African context. With this diagnostic view, he offers an abundance of material, the preacher can use to formulate a hermeneutic and homiletic that can resonate in their specific location.

Mbiti, Bediako, Brueggemann and Kim provide the substratum for whole preaching in African-Immigrant context. They equip the preacher with diagnostic tools that support their homiletic

67. Mbiti, *African Religions*, 211-212.

68. Mbiti, *African Religions*, 3.

endeavors, especially preaching to the whole person. Preaching requires more than diagnoses. There are a plethora of principles and practices needed to formulate cogent theology of preaching. However, critical assessment of context and content is a good place to begin when preaching.

Craddock, Lowry, Mitchell, and Crawford suggest creative approaches and styles of preaching. Styles and methodology are vital because they provide the preacher with different schemes to reach all types of listeners. However, preaching will be redundant if it is solely based on methodologies and stylistic preferences. Most importantly, preaching will be replete when grounded on solid biblical principles. The preacher, of course, must employ creativity and style to reach the listener. Style and methodologies might be meaningless and unsubstantial if not built on solid biblical principles.

Whereas these other voices provided diagnostical tools and different methodologies of preaching; Haddon Robinson provides the homeostasis by bringing us back to the basic—scripture.[69] In emphasizing the importance of scripture, Luke writes of Apollos' biblical acumen; "he was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately" (Acts 18:24-25).

Haddon Robinson makes the case for the "Big Idea" in preaching and examines the role of the preacher as the mouthpiece for the exposition of sacred scripture.[70] The advantage of "Big Idea" is that it brings clarity of the message and authenticity to scripture. Furthermore, when a big idea shines through a sermon it lends credibility to the preacher. Any preaching which has a dominating central idea will easily arouse the attention of the listener and make preaching a dynamic event.

When the preacher appropriates the core idea of scripture it serves as the launching pad, as well as a steppingstone of the sermon. Furthermore, it equips the preacher in the initial stage of preparation

69. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 15.

70. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 4.

and makes all preliminary studies of the text less cumbersome. The main idea once discovered, eases preparation into transition and the development of the main body of the sermon. Most importantly, this enhances the delivery of the sermon and facilitates a connection with the listener. Any preparation that is aided by a big idea makes delivery less taxing to the expositor and brings a delight to the audience. If a single convincing idea becomes the thrust of the message, both messenger and the message will be equally and favorably received.

Before laying the foundation in this volume, Robinson laments the diminishing and misunderstood role of the preacher. The preacher, in his perception, is someone whose role is antiquated and whose task is diminishing and becoming irrelevant. Robinson's redemptive literature puts the burden on the preacher to learn and to refine his craft. His book has a prophetic and priestly dimension: first, as a rebuke to the irrelevancy of preaching and secondly, in providing guidelines on the craft of sermon preparation.

The core of his book deals with biblical exposition, and the transitions, transactions and interactions that are essential to the preacher. Robinson comments: "when they [preachers] fail to preach the scriptures, they abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God."[71] He argues that in dealing with scriptures the preacher is in transition—she is far removed from the "world of the Bible, the modern world and the particular world." The scales of justice must be relatively balanced in the hands of the preacher. An effective exposition of the word must travel through this triage and the skillfulness of preaching must cut across these boundaries.

However, the preacher must be aware that it is a world of transition not permanence. Any preaching which seeks to dwell and make a fortress in just one world may end in decay. A sermon that finds residence in just one world of the Bible becomes a history lesson with no connection to the present. On the other hand, a message that spirals around the modern world becomes dull and stale

71. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 4.

news which the listener may judge as bearing no connection with scripture. Equally so, a message that limits itself in one (particular) world may be "lost in translation," and lose its spiritual and biblical value. Preaching must be dynamic in that it travels from different worlds, from world to person and person to specific need. A sermon which achieves this task is effective in reaching the whole person with the whole word.

The preacher's world is also defined in terms of transactions. The preacher has myriads of tools at his disposal. Preachers of a century far removed from ours may have had a daunting task of accessing materials and resources. Preachers in this modern era have an over-saturated world of data at their disposition. Those who had to deal with scanty information and endless amount of time retrieving data have a transaction to make. The preacher in this modern era with easy access to the over-production of data should make a prudent transaction. His transaction must be profitable to time, event and audience.

In the framework of transactions, various tools are at the disposition of the preacher—lexicons, concordances, commentaries, computer applications and much more. Regardless of the tools the preacher uses, he must be aware that these resources are just aids to embellish sermonic development. No preacher must view these tools as their master but must understand that any resources used are just servants of a bigger task. The preacher must peruse these materials and filter them through the Holy Spirit. The outcome of this transactional process is that "[the preacher becomes a thinker]—a dynamic process … which requires insight, imagination, and spiritual sensitivity—none of which comes from merely following directions."[72] In this sense, Robinson joins with other voices who propounded different styles to reach the listener. Alcántara's paradigm uses the preaching of Gardner Taylor as improvisational; Crawford argues for musicality; and Buttrick and Lowry advocate the sermon as a narrative art form.

72. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 28.

Robinson's methodology placed the preacher on an interactional dimension. The preacher interacts with the audience in "[compassionate], psychological, emotional and spiritual tension."[73] The appellation given to this process is the ministry of incarnation: "whoever will become a preacher must feel the needs of men until it becomes an oppression to his soul."[74] In this case, he appears to be agreeing with Crawford, who argues that the preacher is always interacting with the audience. "The sermon belongs not only to the preacher but also the entire congregation, which joins in with their oral response."[75] Robinson also echoes the sentiment of Mitchell who argues that the sermon should address the "felt need" of the congregation.[76] He and Mitchell also argue that the sermon must "impact the whole person: on cognitive, intuitive, and emotive consciousness."[77]

Robinson deals with various homiletical issues in this book: big idea, the development and the delivery of expository messages. However, the intrinsic message of this book is the faithfulness to the text. The Bible is the language which speaks to all cultures. A preacher who does not stand squarely on the scripture will not be prophetic to any culture—not even to her listeners. A preacher who speaks about the culture of the scripture to his listeners and engagingly speaks the culture of the listener into scriptures, may have discovered a leverage to proclaim the truths of God to all eternity. Robinson writes, "expository preachers confront people about themselves from the Bible instead of lecturing to them the Bible's history or archeology."[78] In this sense, Robinson appears to be in unison with Kim who argues that "only when the listeners become familiar with biblical cultures can they make sense of how God's

73. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 52.

74. Leslie J. Tizard, *Preaching: The Art of Communication* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), 22.

75. Crawford, *Hum,* 37.

76. Mitchell, *Black Preaching,* 104.

77. Mitchell, *Black Preaching,* 97.

78. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 10.

word has an impact on their cultural context."[79] It is the word of God which speaks to every culture, mirrors every culture and transforms every culture. It is the word of God spoken which created man and the world as we know it. By speaking the word of God, the preacher rehearses the voice of God which creates and redeems every people and their culture.

Robinson helps to refine styles and diagnosis by advocating emphasis and faithfulness to scripture. Diagnostical tools and homiletical principles must venerate scripture. Diagnosis will help the preacher with the preliminary stage of preaching. It will help the preacher assess the content and context. Styles will further equip the preacher to reach a variety of listeners. Furthermore, it will help dissolve the defenses mounted by different listeners. But scripture is the word of God par excellence, that God first breathed into man, and he became a living being (Genesis 2:7). Life is ultimately given through the scripture which is the spoken word of God. The aim of whole preaching to African-Immigrants is to reach the whole being with the word of God which gives life.

Robinson's reasoning procures biblical integrity in designing whole person preaching in the African-Immigrant context. Craddock and Lowry make a compelling case for narrative preaching and narrativity. I agree with Lowry that a sermon is a plot. Brueggemann and Kim equip whole preaching with diagnostic tools. Alcántara, Mitchell, and Crawford provide appealing styles of preaching that enable whole preaching. Bediako and Mbiti sharpen our discussion with African theology and sociology.

In essence, these authors help us understand the various characteristics of whole preaching. In whole preaching, the preacher is involved in:

1. Diagnostical work: In whole preaching, the preacher must be a clinician of word and person. When there are problems clinicians in general map the preliminary steps in the healing and redemptive process. Whole preaching must adopt this task because the preacher is a

79. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence,* 38.

clinician of word and person. Thus, assessing the word as it relates to listeners' needs—bringing them to scripture and scripture to them.

2. Exegetical duties: in this capacity, the preacher must demonstrate beyond all doubt his profundity in the scripture. Whole preaching is effective when it demonstrates the authority of scripture. In return, the preacher who subsumes herself under the authority of scripture eventually demonstrates her integrity.
3. Integrative assignment: whole preaching does not rest on a single approach. It borrows and refines various methodologies and relates them suitably to the needs of the listener.
4. Descriptive work: whole preaching must raise questions as well as suggest answers. The listener comes to church with myriads of questions plaguing his mind and would like to hear those questions raised. In whole preaching, the preacher helps the listener confront these questions and come up with answers.
5. Evocative mission: a sermon must evoke[80] a sense of wonder, response and action. Celebration, musicality and improvisation help to evoke a sense of wonder.

In preaching in this context, the drum beat moves from diagnosis to exegesis, to musicality and to celebration. The goal is to critically assess the listener's needs and strategically pinpoint his identity in scripture. In the end, the listener will return to scripture to find out if these things are so (Acts 17:11), and he will erupt in celebration because of his notion of himself in scripture.

80. "Invoke and evoke both stem from the Latin, *Vocare,* meaning "to call." Invoke means "to call upon" and is usually used when someone calls upon a law, right, or authority. Evoke on the other hand means "to call forth" and is often used to refer to calling upon memories or emotions." "Is it Invoke or Evoke?," https://www. Merriam-webster. com/words-at-play/is-it-invoke-or-evoke.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

The aim of this research is to methodically study the internal thinking and working of the world of the listener in the African-Immigrant context. It will explore reasons why they want to listen to sermons, what intrigues them and how to preach to them effectively. Preaching is a person-to-person dynamic. This dynamic is shaped by the allocation of time, energy, efforts, and the investment the preacher makes on the listener. Because it is the preacher initiating the interaction, the listener wants to find out how vested the preacher is in them. The listener will first listen to the person of the preacher before they can embrace the proclamation of the Bible.

To a have a concise understanding of the listener, the research will start with the person of the preacher. This research will conduct personal interviews to understand the preacher and their world.[1] It will also seek to discover the preacher's perception of the listener—to see if the preacher truly understands them. It will research the preacher's homiletical paradigm—the preacher's sermonic construction and delivery. It will try to discover if the preacher's sermon is designed specifically for the listener, or if it simply revolves around the preacher's preferences. The result of this research is to discover, design and develop new patterns of preaching that are effective in an African-Immigrant context.

The research will equally focus on the listener. The purpose of this study is also to delve deeply into the world of the listener. The research will focus on the laity because those not involved in preaching provide a perspective that seasoned or trained preachers have never imagined. The main thrust of this research is to analyze the listener, what type of listener they are and their observation on preaching. This research will be successful if the listener totally participates in and contributes to this study. In the end, we will discover the listeners' perception of the church, its mission, its ministers, and

1. Please see Appendix A for research questions.

the task of preaching. The research will unveil what constitutes an effective or ineffective sermon. Most importantly, the goal of this research is to outline criteria that are vital for the future of preaching in African-Immigrant context.

In addition, this research will incorporate the use of a focus group. This group will consist of laity and none of the participants interviewed will be part of the focus group. The group will analyze the process of sermon construction and delivery. It will analyze examples of effective preaching and styles of effective preachers. It will also evaluate some sample sermons preached in this context. Furthermore, it will identify pitfalls of ineffective preaching and identify practices that are worth emulating. The goal of the focus group is to foster a discussion on whole person preaching as it relates to the identity of African-Immigrants.

On the other hand, the interview with individual participants will ask open ended questions. It will ask follow-up questions so that it is not limited in scope. The goal is to discover new and unique ways of understanding and reaching the listener with the gospel. The data collected in this research will be beneficial to the church. It will inform the church and its preachers how to present the gospel to African-Immigrant listeners and their ever-evolving preferences. It will equip the church with information and tools on preaching effectively to the listener. The material gathered from this research will be part of a homiletic for the African-Immigrant Church.

Some of the obstacles this research envisioned are as follows: Scheduling the interviews with individual participants and working around their busy schedules, organizing the focus groups, and keeping them focused on the task of developing a new homiletical pattern. The most important goal is having the participants focus on the problems, solutions and recommendations and not get diverted to blaming and castigating others. To offset this obstacle, I will implement a follow-up or second interview with individual participants. I will also schedule a follow-up focus group session if needed.

This research will not be solely entrenched in the world of the listeners and preachers. It will study some sample sermons from preachers within this context. Most importantly, it will be guided by sound theological teachings, principles and theories of communication and the discipline of homiletics.

Some Sample Sermons

I listened to a variety of sermons. This includes some of the sermons of the participants that I interviewed. None of the sermons were written. Some were on video, and the others were audio sermons.[2] I witnessed five of the participants as they preached during church services. This gives me the advantage of observing mannerisms and listening to tonality, content and voice inflections. I also listened to sermons by participants' favorite preachers and sermons of other preachers that might impact this research.

Research Methodology

This project will adopt qualitative research. "Qualitative research is process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting and context."[3] Whereas, quantitative research focuses on numerical and statistical analysis, qualitative research reveals the depth and complexities of human relationships and interesting dynamics which cannot be made visible by numerical data. It is axiomatic that quantitative research provides more validity and truthfulness, but it does have its limitations. Statistical analyses are very compelling, but they tend to be generalized and they may deal with abstractions and projections. Qualitative research on the other hand can reveal the depth, nuances, and complexities of human dynamics.

2. Please see Appendix B for the list of sermon sites.

3. Karin Klenke, Susan Martin, and J. Randall Wallace, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership*, 2nd ed. (UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2016), 7.

Quantitative research leads with surveys and standardized questions. While it provides precision, it tends to limit further discovery. Qualitative research deals with interviews, case studies and other instrumentations. This allows the researcher to engage in in-depth probe and inquiry. Questions asked in quantitative research are precise and may not evoke further discovery. On the other hand, the qualitative researcher can ask follow-up questions, and ask for qualifying statements, commentaries, and additional statements. Furthermore, qualitative research is an interactive process where the researcher can observe and evaluate the interviewee. This is a reward not granted to quantitative research.

This project was a semi-structured interview with pastors, laity, visitation to a few church events, and a focus group discussion. It was more than interviews. It included interaction where I was able to observe participants in their elements and further evaluate some of the missing links. Participants interviewed were not included in the focus group to avoid repetition of ideas. Most importantly, I wanted to assess individual input from group dynamics.

Qualitative research is beneficial in this study. First, preaching is a multifaceted approach and a multidisciplinary subject matter. Preaching deals with communication, theology, human relations, economics, government, politics, international relations, technology, and other subject matters that affect persons, communities, and the world. Listeners indicated that sermons must deal with a variety of subject matters and show how it connects with them.

A qualitative approach reveals both sides of the coin as wells as matters behind the curtains. In addition, this approach brings the individual to a closer and more careful observation, whereas the other methodology might view the individual from a distance and just deal in probabilities. Quantitative research has its merits, but this project will be exceptionally served by adopting a qualitative approach.

Interview/Research Questions to Pastors

Most of the participants I interviewed were from anglophone West African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), one from a francophone country (the Republic of Congo) and another from Haiti. Anglophone countries were colonized by Britain and francophone by France. The former tends to imbibe and adopt English culture and the latter, French culture.

The participants were between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-five. Four are female serving as lead or co-pastors or assistant pastors. The remaining seven are male either serving as head or assistant pastors. Eleven of them have undergraduate degrees and five have advanced graduate degrees and beyond. One completed secondary school education and six months of ministerial training. All of them revealed that they were under the tutelage of mentors or pastors who provided guidance for their preparation into ministry. All of the participants interviewed are bi-vocational ministers. They all revealed that the ministry was a second career and that they were responding to a call they knew was present in their lives even as young people.

As bi-vocational pastors they were very busy and scheduling interviews was not an easy task. I gave all of them ample time to prepare for the interview. Two of the interviews were done via telephone and the remaining ones were done after church, at their homes and during community events. Despite the circumstances of the interviews, each of them provides us with a lens through which we can understand the listener and mechanisms through which we can observe their preaching.

Ten questions were designed for pastoral interviews. These questions were designed intentionally to gauge and/or measure salvation experience and calling, sermon preparation and delivery, perception of the listener, mentors and other voices that influence the pastor's preaching and sermonic evaluations. Knowing too well the reality of life for immigrants' pastors and their crunch for time, I did not ask all of them these ten questions. In limited cases we covered all the questions. The interview was designed to ask open-ended questions and follow-up questions. In some instances, some

of the participants wanted to stay within a certain topic. For example, some preachers wanted to talk more about their sermons and would spend more time doing so and others wanted to talk extensively about the listener. All this falls within the scope of the interview to gather materials.

Question One (Preachers)

Question One inquired about the salvation experience of the preacher. By salvation experience, I meant how they came to faith in Christ. All the participants answered that they had a salvation experience. In his book, *Lectures to My Students,* Charles Spurgeon emphasized the minister's call to preach but then tied it to their salvation experience.[4] African-Immigrant preachers emphasized that a salvation experience is a prerequisite for preaching the gospel, but they also consider calling as well. Even without a follow-up question, the participants went ahead and elaborated about their calling to ministry.

Question One gauges salvation experience and ministerial calling. In an interview with one of the participants, he noted that ministry is based on the salvation a person receives. He argued that pastors' sermons are influenced primarily by their salvation and secondarily by their call to ministry. He went on to say that a preacher's sermon will reveal if they have other motives for ministry.[5] Another pastor said that "preachers in the African community are viewed as losers and preaching is for people who are not able to succeed academically."[6] In one of the church services I visited a woman was giving a testimony of how she resented the call to ministry. She said that preaching is for people who are unable to succeed in life and they choose preaching so that they can have something to lean on. She noted that when students are not able to pass their examination they are counseled to consider going into the

4. Charles H. Spurgeon, www.onthewing.org/Spur_Lectures1.PDF, 19 ff.

5. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019.

6. Interview with a pastor from New Jersey, January 11, 2020.

ministry.[7] Bryan Chapell writes, "the first well-documented foe of the gospel is the erosion of authority."[8] Regardless of this notion, all of the participants referred to their calling to preach as the highest calling.[9] "Theologically, the call is critical to the ministerial profession because it roots the minister's service in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and response to his direction for one's life work."[10] "God shapes the heart of a leader through the call. This call is divinely orchestrated setting apart the leader [preacher] for some special task."[11]

Question Two (Preachers)

Question Two asks: "When did you first hear a sermon and what did you remember about the sermon?" Four of the twelve participants remembered the first sermon they heard. Three of them remembered the topic. Five of them remembered the idea of the sermon although they could not pin-point the topic. Those who could not remember the sermon topic remembered the essence of the message. However, all the participants remembered clusters of sermons that began to frame their homiletical journey.

One of the participants who remembered his first sermon was so enamored with this question. When I asked him, his eyes lightened up, his smile reached from "sea to shining sea" and his chest

7. West African Anglophone countries adopted British educational systems. At the end of their secondary school education, they are scheduled for entrance exams into higher education. These exams are known as General Certificate Examinations (conducted by the West Africa Examination Council): ordinary and advanced levels. Those who fail these exams are counselled to consider the ministry. When they do, they are considered as failures.

8. Bryant Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 15.

9. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019, who said, "this is the highest calling."

10. Marianne Gonlag, "Perceived Evidences of the Call to Ministry and its Experiential Affirmation" (EdD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992), 5.

11. Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 95.

swelled up in his response. He said, "the message was preached by Rev. Ezekiel and the topic was 'Not So in Our Country.'"[12] He said that the message dealt with ethical and behavioral issues that were inimical to Christian values. This was the event which stirred preaching for him.

The purpose of this question was for preachers to begin to identify "the hands (homiletically) that fed them;" that is, those upon whose shoulders they stand. Whole preaching does not rest on an individual but on a symphony of voices that ignited the fire in their spirit. The voice(s) that created a spark in a preacher's mind, maps the beginning of an educational milestone. This is the time that one learns some of the rudiments of preaching, discovers their talent and catches principles that are not easily taught from those that inspire them. This pedagogical moment is illuminated in the principle Jesus taught that "the student is not above the teacher" (Matthew 10:24). Charles Spurgeon commented: "read other men; they are instructive as books."[13] Whole preaching is not an individualistic model; it is the echo of a plethora of voices of the past, forming and informing the preacher.

In building on the foundation of progenitors, the preacher begins to adopt patterns, refine delivery methods, embellish rhetorical preferences, evaluate preaching styles, and formulate his preferred methodology. The preacher's style, whether it is a repudiation of an observed methodology or a reformulation of a preferred approach, has a wholistic signature even at its inception.

Question Three (Preachers)

Question Three asks: "What did you like about the sermon and how did it change you?" This question serves as a litmus test. The goal of preaching is transformation. Evidence of personal transformation may give them the audacity to believe that their preaching will also result in the

12. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

13. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students, Vol. 1* (Albany; OR: The Ages Digital Library Collections, Ages Software, USA 1.0, 1996), 202.

conversion and transformation of their listeners. This is the transactional aspect of whole preaching: the transformation of both pulpit and pew.

All the participants remembered this event as a turning point in their lives. This first sermon they heard was an epiphany for them. It motivated them to be serious about their personal lives and helped them maintain a disciplined Christian life. On hearing the sermon entitled, "Not So in Our Country," the participant commented, "the impact of this sermon help[s] us shape our lives … that we are now in another commonwealth, and we have to be disciplined and godly. This sermon was preached to deal with all the psychedelics coming into the church and the outrageous lifestyles and dress codes. But after this sermon, people changed their ways."[14]

In reexamining Question Three, one of the participants stated, "Pastoral content far outweighs our experiences." I asked a follow-up question, "What do you mean by this?" He said that pastors would preach based on the reason why they enter the ministry. He said, "for example, a preacher who wants a big church will design sermon for his context. A preacher who wants fame will develop sermon to get fame. A preacher who wants money, will be focused on money." He went on to say, "my context is my assignment." My sermons are based on the reasons why I am called to the ministry and other preachers preached on the reason why they come to the ministry.[15]

Question Four (Preachers)

Question Four asks: "When did you preach your first sermon and what do you think of it now?" Question Four measures the transition from what the person has appropriated from sources other than himself to that which he has imbibed internally. In an externalized learning concept, the preacher picks up his theory of preaching from someone else. In an internalized construct, the preacher evokes the

14. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

15. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019.

gifts and talents that are latent within him. Adopting principles from an external source is just a step towards the learning process. Internalizing these principles brings the learner to the threshold of learning. This shift in perception signifies whole preaching.

Question Four is intended to gauge the process of remembering. Five of the participants did not remember their first sermon but six of them did. One said that he wanted to forget his first sermon because he felt that it was "horrible."[16] Though some of them were not able to remember their first sermon, they could recollect the substance of the sermon.

Remembrance is a dynamic process. It was the radical shift that has taken place in their ministerial development. Remembrance for some was not to dwell in the past. It was to continue in gleaning lessons from their experiences and refining their homiletical skills. In response to this, one of the participants said "my preaching has evolved over time. What happened to my preaching has nothing to do with my history but my evolved nature."[17]

Remembrance is an educational process. Some of those who remembered their first sermon indicated they have gleaned principles from the past and have developed a new identity. All the participants indicated that the process of reminiscing gave them a validation of their growth and development.

Remembrance is a selective process. It accounts for the change that has taken place in and within the individual. It helps them to be objective as well as flexible to new ideas. Those who remember build from the past. Those who do not remember are situated in a constant learning process. Those who do not remember at all develop their conceptual approach to learning. Regardless, the brain has its own neuroplasticity and is able to adjust to different learning situations. However, each

16. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019. He said, "I would rather not remember it because it was horrible. Looking back, I could have done a better job."

17. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019.

participant has developed a dynamic in which they deal with and manage memory. “Memory does not comprise a single unitary system, but rather an array of interacting systems, each capable of encoding or registering information, storing it, and making it available for retrieval.”[18] “Memories are representations of acquired knowledge and skill during a life time. They are an essential part of a person’s individuality, a record of their experiences that can be consciously recalled or re-lived.”[19]

Question Four appraises what is happening internally to the preacher. It transitions from the other to the self: from the universal to the personal and specific. Having observed others, it must be asked: How does the preacher modify and translate the message to suit his personality and context? Whole preaching comes to life when the preacher effectively and successfully implements this transition.

Listening is pivotal to preaching. The message is proclaimed as a response to moorings in the mind and soul of the preacher. Without any rumblings in the mind of the preacher there would not be a whole and convincing message to proclaim. Lowry referred to this as “the itch.”[20] The itch cannot be preached. It signals a starting point in the idea of the sermon. The sermon at this point is in its embryonic stage and to incubate the itch, the preacher must employ every form of listening mechanisms, such as attentiveness, reflecting, restating, contemplation, prayer, and so much more.

We often hear the cliché that humans are endowed with two ears and one mouth, so that they can listen more and talk less. This means that preaching requires more listening than speaking. The listener will see beyond the expressions and realize the depth of listening that birthed the sermon. The listener will begin to recognize some of the source of inspiration, from the internal and external cues.

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18. Alan Baddeley, *Essentials of Human Memory* (New York: Psychology Press, 2014), 18.

19. Elaine K. Perry, Heather Ashtor, and Allan H. Young, *Neurochemistry of Consciousness: Neurotransmitters in the Mind* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2002), 320.

20. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 19.

Some of those cues are voices that are present in the sermon and internal cravings that will inspire attention with listener. The listener knows when the preacher has listened to the Bible, tradition, culture, heroes and heroines of faith, relevant authorities, and the Holy Spirit. Any effective sermon will clearly demonstrate the reflective act of listening preceding the sermon as well as the on-going listening mechanics during the sermon. Listening is indeed a continuous act. One of the participants commented that she knows when a preacher has seriously prayed and listened to the Holy Spirit when the sermon is preached.[21]

Effective listening is an indication that the preacher has invested in the life of the listener and engaged their context. Most importantly, listening breathes life into the personality of the preacher and stirs up a dynamism to his sermon. Whole preaching commences with listening. It is an all-inclusive process: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Diana Bonet, et al write that "the four key elements of the listening process are: hear the message; interpret the message; evaluate the message and respond to the message."[22] In this context, one can hear the prophet Samuel saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9).

Listening eventually leads to thinking. If listening is embryonic in nature, thinking is the process of parturition. Listening is the process of hearing many voices, and thinking is a critical process of determining and selecting materials for the sermon. "Pure 'listening' suggests the intake of aural information, whereas thinking suggests a critical 'review' of what has been heard."[23] The listener is engaged and committed to accumulating a vast amount of materials, and the thinker yields to the rigorous process of evaluation and selection.

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21. Interview with a participant from Congo, October 30, 2019.

22. Diana Bonet, Debbie Woodbury, and Jill Zayszly, *The Business of Listening: A Practical Guide to Effective Listening* (Canada: Crisp Publication, 2001), 13.

23. "What's the Difference Between Listening and Thinking?," www.quora.com.what-s-the-different-between-listening-thinking&form=ANSPHI&refig=904c01.

Although listening and thinking are synonymous, one can evaluate the stages in this cognitive process. While listening is an inward and reflective act, thinking is a projection of that which was conceived. The acts appear to be similar, but the progressions are different. The listener approaches the act with no, or scanty, information, but the thinker deals with information gathered from listening. Listening may not ask questions, but thinking is the internal wrestling with a sequence of questions. "Thinking or reasoning has been cast as a decision cycle within an action-perception loop."[24] Decisions are made ultimately out of what a person thinks. A preacher may be likened to the work of a criminologist. He must listen and collect facts. Ultimately, he must begin to piece from the plethora of information and present a convincing case which can withstand every form of scrutiny.

What makes preaching whole is the cognitive, emotive, and affective engagement cultivated into the process. That which stimulates the whole person (preacher) has the same propensity to awaken the whole person (listener). Whole preaching is an exchange of undercurrent stimulations between the preacher and the listener. The preacher strives to help the listener internalize his rumblings from within, and the listener strives to enter into those rumblings and becomes deeply engaged in interpreting those rumblings. This exchange is both cognitive and emotive. While the preacher may begin with an external affect, the goal is to transmute that affect into an internal awakening in the listener. This process becomes successful when the listener mutters under her breath and says, "I see!" This offsets the listeners' predicament: "be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing but never perceiving" (Isaiah 6:9).

R. M. Hare in his book, *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point,* commented: "these related cognitive and affective states bring with them also a conative state."[25] Whole preaching begins

24. Michael T. Cox and Anita Raja. *Metareasoning: Thinking About Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 4.

25. R.M. Hare, *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981), 93.

from the core of the individual. That which begins with an internal compulsion within the preacher, reaches an internal rhythmic pulsation in the listener. The Prophet Jeremiah referred to this as "fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). The word which begins in the depths and crevices of the preacher's spirit must be translated intentionally to the depth of the listener. "Preaching is probably as close … to giving birth."[26] Both mother and offspring are in pain in this act of creation. The mother cries in pain as she introduces the child into the world and the child cries as it enters the world. The Psalmist expressed it profoundly when he wrote, "deep calls to deep" (Psalm 42:7). It is whole person and whole word colliding and interacting intricately which gives birth to the whole.

Haddon Robinson commented,

> It is difficult to think. It is even more difficult to think about thinking. It is most difficult to talk about thinking. Yet that stands as the basic task of homiletics. Homileticians observe how preachers work and attempt to get inside their head to discover what goes on there as they prepare to preach…thinking is a dynamic process. Effective biblical preaching requires insight, imagination, and spiritual sensitivity—none of which comes from merely following direction.[27]

Question Five (Preachers)

Question Five asks: "What do you think whole preaching is?" The purpose of this question is more than to garner a definition. It is to elicit a theology or philosophy of preaching. Most of the participants do not view preaching as anything else but whole. The consensus amongst the participants was that whole preaching is preaching the whole word of God. For a definition of whole preaching, four of the participants referred to the book of Revelation:

> I warn everyone who hears the words of this prophecy of this scroll: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll (Revelation 22:18-19).

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26. Donald R. Sunukjian, *An Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapid, MI: Kregel, 2007), 15.

27. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 27-28.

One of the participants defines whole preaching "as a spiritual word: a fusion of word and spirit." He stated his theology of preaching as a union between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. Preaching is when the whole man and the Spirit are in complete union. Whole preaching, he propounded, is when the whole Spirit of God unites with spirit of man and affects the whole spirit of the listener. Preaching, he noted, is a Spirit-word and the task of the sermon is to reach the spirit of man: both preacher and listener.[28]

In subscribing to this theology of preaching, one of the participants said that whole preaching is "spirit, soul and body." He said that "the anointing of God is to reach the spirit of man before it affects soul and body. The anointing of the spirit is from the Spirit of God to the spirit of man and eventually to the spirit of the listener. Whole preaching is to reach these three dimensions of the person. Whole preaching is not just one aspect of the person. It is the total person: spiritual, physical and mental."[29]

Another participant defines whole preaching "as intimacy with God." She went on to say that whole preaching is built on the continued and sustained prayer and devotional life of the preacher. To preach whole means the preacher maintains a prayer life. She went on to ask how one can deliver a whole message from someone whom they have not heard from or from someone with whom they do not have a vital and functional relationship.[30]

Question Six (Preachers)

Question Six asks: "How do you prepare your sermons, and how do you evaluate them?" The purpose of question six is to gauge originality because we are all influenced by someone and vice-versa.

28. Interview with a pastor from Haiti, October 30, 2019.

29. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 2, 2019.

30. Interview with a pastor from the Republic of Congo, October 30, 2019.

Question Six, seeks to gauge a deviation in their preaching methodology. It seeks to find the turning point: the place where the preacher bids farewell to those who influenced her preaching and begins to forge her own voice. At some point, she may have erected her homiletical edifice on a person or event. Eventually, she needs to ride on her personality and build her original template. Whole preaching begins with the preacher and creates a translucence where the word comes shining through her personality.

Question Six also seeks to decipher creativity. Like the ancient story of the blind men and the elephant, they must present their perception to the listener. (These blind men, after touching the elephant, described what the animal felt like to them.)[31] Although this story is not viewed favorably, it indicates an element of perception. Like the four gospel writers each presenting Jesus through their own lens, every preacher must let their creativity shine through to the listener.

Question Six additionally gauges a conformity to biblical and homiletical principles as well as reinventing the wheel. In whole preaching, the preacher must be able to create leverage by holding the scripture on one hand and the world of the listeners on the other. He must be able to color within and outside the box. There are biblical principles which guide a preacher as well as governing homiletical principles which enlighten preaching. In whole preaching, the preacher must stay true to scripture, but he must demonstrate "improvisational [skills and] commitment to crossing borders and transgressing boundaries."[32] For example, a pianist might learn all the principles of music but as he develops his musical ability, he comes back and reimagines the fundamental musical theories he was taught and transgresses some of those principles. By doing so, he begins to rediscover new musical perspectives and soars to new horizons even beyond his imaginations.

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31. American Poet, John Godfrey Saxe retelling the ancient Indian folklore of "The Blind Men and the Elephant: A Hindoo Fable," https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type1317.html#saxe. In this story, the blind men gave their own perception of the elephant.

32. Jared E. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 31.

Question Six further gauges the *raison d'être*. By describing their sermonic development and delivery, some of the participants reveal their modus operandi. One of the participants revealed that he was drawn to Pauline theology of grace. He stated how he designs his sermons to reflect the grace of God. He said that even his church bears the name grace and his sermon centers on or reflects the grace of God.[33] Another participant pointed out that his method is to use marketing strategies to sell his case to the listener. He mentioned that he has transferred all from what he has learnt from working in Human Resources and the field of marketing and now employs power point presentations in all his sermons. He argued that the power point presentation would grip the listener and help them follow through the sermon.[34]

Furthermore, Question Six measures homiletical approaches, preaching patterns, delivery styles and preaching habits. The homiletical approaches of the participants vary. Two would approach their sermon preparation focusing on the cultural context. Four begin their sermon preparation with prayer. They also sustain the entire process with prayer. Four begin their sermon preparation by zeroing on the text. However, one of those who said that they would focus on the text also said that at times, she would look to the lectionary as a guide.[35] One would focus on the need of the listener. The participant who claimed to focus on the need of listener also would observe events around them.[36]

One of the participants who claimed to focus on context buttressed his argument by saying, that was the approach of Jesus. He argued that Jesus used Jewish ways of thought, lifestyle, and culture, and

33. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

34. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019.

35. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 7, 2019.

36. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

in his parables would draw the listener to the immediate context. He concluded that this approach is whole preaching, and that this is the way to preach to an African-Immigrant context.[37]

The participants whose homiletical approach is from the text, fall in the category of those who define whole preaching from John's warning against adding or deleting from the word in Revelation 22:18. These participants view whole preaching as biblical preaching: preaching the whole gospel. They mentioned that they have developed the habit of textual and expository preaching.

Those who adopt a contextual approach and/or a listener centered approach, consequentially develop an integrative approach, which appropriates scripture, context, and listener. They argued that whole preaching takes into consideration the teachings of scripture, the person of the listener, events, and context.

In discussing their method of preparation, one of the participants said that she prepares her sermon a day before she preaches, or she may prepare her sermon on her way to church. She mentioned that she listens to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. She went on to reiterate that if the Holy Spirit speaks to her to change her message, she will do so instantaneously. She said that she does not write her sermon and prefers to preach extemporaneously.[38]

Another participant said that her pattern of preaching is whole preaching because she always designs her sermon to start from the Old Testament and ends in the New Testament. She argues, that instead of sprinkling her sermon with quotations from here and there, she develops a trajectory where her message builds a foundation from the Old Testament and finishes the edifice in the New Testament. She described this approach as whole preaching.[39]

37. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

38. Interview with a pastor from Liberia, December 8, 2019.

39. Interview with a pastor from Sierra Leone, October 19, 2019.

Two others described their preaching as Christ-centered preaching. They argued that the message is about Christ and what he has done for you. “In my sermons, the focus is on Christ. The purpose of the word is to make Jesus Christ real to people,” one of the participants stated.[40]

Most of the participants come from or are influenced by the “Holiness” tradition, and their preaching is based on the Holy Spirit. All of them emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit in their preaching. Those who uphold Christ-centered preaching make a U-turn and reiterate that their preaching is Holy Spirit inspired, Holy Spirit led, and Holy Spirit sustained. Buttrick writes, “God is a mysterious Presence-in-Absence.”[41]

Question Seven (Preachers)

Question Seven asks: “What do you know about the listener, and do you have a theory about the listener?” Question Seven seeks to generate a view about the listeners. Most of the participants do not see any distinctions between listeners in the African and African-Immigrant context. However, two of the participants were able to draw a line of demarcation between the two. In distinguishing African listeners from African-Immigrant listener, one of the participants said that,

> Africa is a place of needs, and the listeners buy into the gospel of fulfillment to take out of the place of needs. The African-Immigrant listener is an economic refugee and has enormous financial pressure here and at home. However, the African-Immigrant listener has a tendency to influence the message because he/she has some economic advantage over the African preacher. The African listener might be subjugated because of his economic disadvantage and the African-Immigrant listener has the upper hand.[42]

Another pastor gave an anecdote about listeners in two different African countries. He said that a pastor from Nigeria who was preaching in South Africa, asked his listener to sow seeds of faith so that

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40. Interview with a pastor from Congo, October 30, 2019.

41. David Buttrick, *Homiletics: Moves and Structure* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 116.

42. Interview with a pastor from Ghana, September 2, 2019.

they can get a visa to come to America. This preacher did not do his homework well, he thought what worked well for him in Nigeria would work in South Africa. This is where content should match reality of culture, lifestyle, and expectations. He said that the South African congregation rejected the message and refused the appeal.

He went on to say that listeners in South Africa are not like listeners in Nigeria who are obsessed to come to America. He said that the economy in South Africa is relatively better that the economy in Nigeria. He also added that there are other factors that distinguish listeners from different locations. Even within an economic deprived African country not all listeners are concerned about the same thing.[43] Even within location there are variables.

Another participant said that listeners in Africa go to church because it is a place where they find salvation. Even though they may be poor, they go to church as their place of only hope. On the other hand, there are some African-Immigrants who come to church that have already received Christ before coming to the United States. In the African-Immigrant context, she said that listeners come to church because their friends come to church. The church is their place of identity but also a place to reconnect with their faith, their history, and their culture. They come because of loneliness.[44]

One of the participants gave an extended assessment of the listeners in the African-Immigrant context. The listener is characterized by,

> 1. Belief in demonic power and struggle. Africans are raised to acknowledge and contend with demonic powers and powers of darkness.
>
> 2. Entrenchment in African traditional religion. These include but not limited to Islam, traditionalist, spiritualist, etc. Africans struggle with African traditional religion. For example, an African would be petrified to reveal their plans because they fear that someone might bewitch them. For some of them it is "like the chicken and the egg." Which came first, "Africanism or Christianity?"

43. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 15, 2019.

44. Interview with a pastor from Congo, October 30, 2019.

3. Belief that the Bible is the word of God. However, their belief in the word of God is contingent on immediate results. When misfortune happens, they view it as a curse from God. For example, they do not internalize some scriptures which say: "the righteous person has many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all" (Psalm 34:19); or other scripture that say "all things work for good" (Romans 8:28); or other scriptures which tell them that God answers prayer. For them quoting Bible is one thing but believing it is another.

4. Belief in prayer. The way African-Immigrants pray reflect their cultural beliefs. They envisioned God as also their local deities. However, they are easily despondent if their prayers are not answered the way they expected. When that happens, they become easily disillusioned and go after other sources like "marabouts and fortune tellers."

5. Belief in miracle, visions, and prophecies. If the church does not provide any of these, they may leave the church and search for "ecstatic" communities or preachers that promise and provide miracles, visions, and prophecies.

6. The African/African-Immigrant shares a common belief in individuality with their American counterparts. Americans are by nature individualistic. African and African-Immigrants because of their long history and interaction with marabouts and African traditional religion also have an individualistic nature. They look for "what is mine."

7. Belief in celebration, music, and dancing. The drum is the principal symbol of African worship.[45]

Another participant commented that African-Immigrant listeners are always on the edge and that they are very sensitive. They can easily misconstrue what the preacher says. The preacher must tread cautiously and be careful of what he says. She went on say that her training as a medical professional has taught her how to be caring and compassionate.[46]

Question Eight (Preachers)

Question Eight asks: "What strategies do you have to study and observe the listener, and how do you think your listener evaluates your sermons?" This question further investigates the changing dynamics of the listener and the cultural shifts even within the identical landscape.

45. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 7, 2019.

46. Interview with a pastor from Sierra Leone, October 19, 2019.

Every product designed is intended to reveal how much knowledge the manufacturer has about the consumer. In this same capacity, whole preaching must demonstrate the veracity of knowledge the preacher has about the listener. When the listeners say to themselves, this preacher knows me, then they become very receptive to the message. On the other hand, if the preacher does not know the listener, the listener may easily become disinterested in the sermon.

One of the participants has an interesting scriptural approach to understanding and evaluating the listener. He argues that the sermon is shaped by the personality of the listener. He draws his approach from the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

1. Understand the listener's need for a relationship— "our father" (Matthew 6:9).
2. Understand the listener's need for wholeness and holiness— "hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9).
3. Understand the listener's need for purpose and direction— "your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).
4. Understand the listener's need for leadership— "your will be done" (Matthew 6:10).
5. Understand the listener's need for provision— "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).
6. Understand the listener's need for forgiveness— "forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12).
7. Understand the listener's need for protection— "deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

He argued that the Lord's Prayer is a treatise on the personality of the listener. He went on to say that he approaches his sermons with this at the back of his mind and this is how he evaluates the listener. This approach addresses the total man: body, soul, and spirit. The listener's physical need— "give us this day," the listener's spiritual need— "forgive our debt"—the need for the listener's soul, and "deliver us from evil"—the need for the listener's spirit. These basic needs are all in the Lord's Prayer.[47]

47. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

Another participant said that to correctly assess and evaluate the listeners, the preacher must be aware of their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. He argued that the preacher must always bear in the mind that these are the areas that affect the listener. He supported his argument by quoting James 1:27. "Religion that God our Father accepts is as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." He commented that whole preaching must be accompanied by acts of grace to those in need.[48]

All the participants mentioned that they get sermon feedback primarily from their spouses. They also mentioned that they get sermon feedback from their constant interactions with their listeners at parties, home visits and other cultural events. The feedback they receive at these events does not necessarily involve any criticism of their sermons but stimulates further discussion. At these events, they evaluate how much their listeners receive and apply the word to their lives. These events also allow the participants to keep up with cultural shifts and trends in their communities and helps them reevaluate their preaching—adjust and make corrections as they see it fit.

None of the participants have any formal structure for evaluating their sermons. All of them mentioned that they rely on the witness of the Holy Spirit before sermon preparation and after delivery.

Question Nine (Preachers)

Question Nine asks: "Who are your preaching heroes (or favorite preachers), and what do you learn from them?" Question Nine reveals lessons that they have learnt from these voices—methods that can become crossovers for them or principles they can disavow. Most importantly, Question Nine gauges the point at which they rewire, and recalibrate their methodology. With knowledge garnered from their heroes they must be able to reimagine their tactics. Preaching is about listening—how they

48. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

listen to the voices of the past, how they dig deep and listen to themselves and the listeners. Whole preaching is a listener exchange, each simultaneously listening to the other.

Listening is consequential to preaching. Buttrick writes that "sermons are formed in consciousness."[49] The preacher should listen to the text as well as the background that is superimposed on the text. There are voices of the characters and events that will ultimately dominate his choice of sermon. The preacher is the first listener of the sermon. He must trade places with the listener and anticipate the effect of his preaching. The preacher should listen and carefully select materials that accentuate his personality and align with the message. Most importantly, he must carefully weave through these so that his personality does not override the sermon. Lastly, the preacher must listen to the Holy Spirit.

Two of the twelve participants strongly expressed that they do not have a favorite preacher. One of these two, however, expressed a strong admiration for a Dutch Missionary whose preaching accent and disposition impacted her. She said, "the fire in this man's voice is something that I never forget."[50]

The remaining ten participants were excited to name their favorite preachers. Five of them mentioned Bishop T.D. Jakes. Three of them brought up Joel Osteen and two alluded to the Reverend Billy Graham. These were the dominant names on the list. They also mentioned other preachers as well. One of the participants said that his wife was his favorite preacher. He said that he was enamored with the way she analyzed and presented the text.[51]

Another participant deviated from naming any contemporary preacher. She said that her favorite preacher is Paul the Apostle. Asked why she chose Paul, she said that Paul was the least

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49. David Buttrick, *Homiletics,* xii.

50. Interview with a pastor from Congo, October 30, 2019.

51. Interview with a pastor from Haiti, October 30, 2019.

expected to be a preacher. She reiterated that Paul makes his own mistakes, and his life shows us that the only perfection is in Christ.[52]

Some of the other preachers mentioned were: Franklin Jentezen, the late Dr. Myles Monroe, the late R.C. Sproul, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, Bishop David Oyedepo (Senior Pastor of Winner Chapel in Nigeria), Benny Hinn, John Hagee, and Pastor W.F. Kumuyi (founder of Deeper Life in Nigeria).

Those who mentioned Bishop Jakes say that they admire his exegetical skills, his use of illustrations, how he applies scripture to his listener and his passion for preaching. Dr. Graham was noted for his evangelistic sermons, and that his sermons were very simple to understand. The admirers of Joel Osteen noted that his sermons were simple daily advice that the listener can run along with. Pastor Chris Oyakhilome (from Nigeria), whom one of the participants described as a protégé of Benny Hinn, was noted for his prayer services and healing ministries that are similar to Benny Hinn's. Pastor Kumuyi was renowned for his "teaching skills," one of the participants commented. [53] Regarding the late Dr. Myles Monroe, one of the participants expressed that he was distinguished for his use of logic in his sermons. One of the participants said that John Hagee and Franklin Jentezen are anointed preachers—accolades reserved for a great preacher within Pentecostal circles. By this they mean that they are very effective preachers. One of the participants was enamored by the theological acumen of the late R.C. Sproul—the prominent American theologian and pastor.

Question Ten (Preachers)

Question Ten asks: "What do you observe from your preaching, and what are the challenges of preaching in the African-Immigrant context?" This question measures the changing dynamics in and within this cultural context. Most importantly, it gauges the minister as a thinker. While listening may be

52. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 7, 2019.

53. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

likened to the period of incubation, thinking is likened to the period of parturition—listening conceives a thought and thinking delivers an idea. Sermons pose questions and provide the answers. The preacher confronts problems but also offers solutions. Human problems appear to resemble a labyrinth and the preacher must be able to journey through it to provide an answer to the listener. Most importantly, the preacher is intended to be a repository of knowledge as well as "the purveyor of ideas." The ideas that he espouses, instill pragmatic and eternal values. "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ deals with every core of human struggle, and the preacher is called to be at the center of the agony of God's people.

Preaching is a dual task: horizontal and vertical. The message should be relevant to current time issues and address the problems of the listener. Equally, it must pulsate with a message from heaven. The listener must be convinced that their problems are heard within the heavenly realm, but they must hear the voice of God distinctly from the preacher. In essence, preaching must breathe God into human and social problems—bring God to the people and the people to God.

One of the participants said that one of the challenges of preaching in the African-Immigrant church is that the members are overworked.[54] Being overworked means that the listeners are constantly tired and cannot absorb the message. She went on to express that it is very challenging to preach to listeners whose minds are not active to receive the word. To make matters worse, she adds, most of them come to church for the wrong reasons.[55]

54. Interview with a participant from Nigeria, January 20, 2021.

55. Interview with a pastor, October 10, 2019.

Two of the participants mentioned listener's motivation—that they demand that their needs be met, and that they come saying how do I get what I want from God. One of the participants argued that sometimes this makes the preacher forget about their calling.[56]

All the participants strongly agreed that the listeners focus on miracles, prosperity, and prophecies. One of the participants said, "a person can be cured of an ailment or healed from lameness. That person can be walking but the person could walk right into hell if not saved. But that person cannot walk out of hell."[57] Another participant mentioned that one of the main challenges in preaching to African-Immigrant congregation is that the members do not respect the pastor.[58]

Analysis of the Preachers

All the participants emphasized the importance of the Bible in their preaching and said that they would listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their sermon preparation and delivery. One of the participants reiterated that his sermon focus is on the listener, and another mentioned that his preaching is bent on the event and context. Most of the participants revealed that they understand the listener, but their emphasis was on the importance of preaching the Bible.

However, there appears to be a variable here. Listening to the Holy Spirit is suggestive. It can indicate listening to direct the voice of the Holy Spirit or listening to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. It can also mean, the strategy the preacher adopts to interpret events, circumstances and context affecting the sermon. Loyalty to scripture was of utmost importance to most of the participants. However, some of them indicated that they are inclined towards an integrated approach—that is, prioritizing listeners, event, and scripture.

56. Interviews with pastors from Nigeria and Ghana, December 7, 2019 and September 2, 2019.

57. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

58. Interview with a pastor from Sierra Leone, February 11, 2020.

Research Questions: Listeners Interviews

I interviewed ten listeners: seven females and three males. Six are from Sierra Leone, two from Ghana, one from Nigeria and one from Cameroon. They all reside in the United States having migrated from Africa. They were between the ages of twenty-two and fifty-six. Three have master's degrees, five with bachelor's degree, one is a college student and one completed secondary school. Seven are married and have children and three are single. They all claimed to be practicing Christians and attended church regularly. Two of them said that they started their faith journey in the Anglican tradition, two were Methodist and the rest grew up in Pentecostal denominations. All of them now claimed to be Pentecostals.

Question One (Listeners)

Question One asks: "Are you a Christian or, are you just interested in listening to sermons?" This question deals with issues of identity; that is, it seeks to ascertain whether the listener is an orthodox or nominal Christian. By orthodox Christian, I mean Christians that have experienced conversion or a "born again" experience; and by nominal, I mean individuals who are basically "church goers" and have never had a personal conversion experience.

All the participants proclaimed that they have experienced rebirth and that they are well seasoned and committed followers of Christ. Their responses are very important because it provides the preacher with a preciseness with which to assess the listener's needs. Listeners in these two camps may have different needs. The nominal Christian may be a seeker, searching for salvation, whereas the orthodox Christian may be in a quest for sanctification.

All the participants appeared to be passionate about their faith. Although they said that spirituality in America is not the same as in Africa, yet they appeared to exemplify characteristics of

believers in the Lord, Jesus Christ. They were very committed to their churches and volunteered in various tasks that their pastors call upon them to do.

Question Two (Listeners)

Question Two asks: "If you are a Christian, when did you become involved in the church?" This question supports Question One. Its purpose is to further investigate the listeners' Christian odyssey. It gauges various stages of their spiritual growth and development, and it also reveals their priorities. All the participants disclosed that they were raised in Christian families. But that at some point in their lives, they adopted the faith as theirs.

In the African-Immigrant church some of its adherents are converts from Islam. In that case, the preacher would have to be mindful of their journey, needs and challenges. Those who come from Muslim backgrounds appear to be passionate about their faith. They view their newfound faith as a privilege and that their salvation was a second chance from spending eternity in hell. They compare the uncertainties of their former faith to the assurances they have found in Christ and are thankful for their salvation. For some of them the preaching of the word is new to them, and they need the word like newborn babies (1 Peter 2:2). Whereas those who grew up in the church may not have the same urgency as the others. The preaching of the word is to buttress their belief systems or to bring into remembrance all that they have been taught.

Those who grew up in the church appeared to be very laid-back in their faith. They may have been schooled in Christian doctrines of grace and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Those who come from Muslim background appear to hold on to works and other rituals they may have been tutored in. They tend to drag along some vestiges and disciplines of their former faith which sometime may either aid or hamper their development.

In preaching to African-Immigrant listeners, the preacher should be aware of some of these challenges. African-Immigrants continually contend with Islam and other faiths which are vying for their attention. Preachers in this context must be instructed in comparative religions, so that they can minister to their listeners effectively and with authority. Most African-Immigrant listeners have relatives who are Muslims, and they must be equipped with faith and doctrine so that they can witness the word to their families, relatives, and other acquaintances.

Question Three (Listeners)

Question Three asks: "Whether you are a Christian or not, what interests you about listening to preaching?" This question illuminates Questions One and Two. All the participants maintained that they are Christians. One of the participants said, "I listened for common themes that are a confirmation to my circumstances or something new that I haven't heard before."[59] Another one said, "I listen to sermons to increase my knowledge of God."[60]

A third participant said, "When I listen to a sermon, I listen for the word, the message, enlightenment and trying to understand the Bible. So, I listen for how the characters in the Bible come to life so I can understand and relate to them. I look for motivation, hope, encouragement, peace, love, calmness, energy, awareness, inspiration, and purpose."[61]

Most of the participants were raised in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and they said that the sermon was the most important facet of the service. They were taught to regard the sermon as the time that God speaks to them, and they pay special attention to the preacher. They mentioned that after they have danced in praise and worship, this was the time they focus and, listen to the sermon.

59. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 16, 2019.

60. Interview with a listener from Nigeria, November 10, 2019.

61. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 22, 2020.

African-Immigrant listeners are not like African-American listeners who roll in response to the preacher. Some will shout with praise of "Alleluia" and "Amen," but most of them remain quiet and listen to the sermon. However, their body language will show their interest and enthusiasm for the sermon.

Two of the participants say that they are interested in the topic and how it relates to them. However, all the participants agreed that they are interested in the preaching of the scriptures and correct doctrines. One of the participants said that her church should have a suggestion box where members can suggest topics for sermons.[62]

A listener whom I encountered after a church service said that he listens to sermons because of the ideas that the preacher proclaims. He said that he is intrigued when the preacher deals with secular issues and relates them to the Bible. This listener described himself as "Chrismus." The word "Chrismus" is coined to mean "Chris"–meaning "Christian," and "Mus"–meaning "Muslim." By this he means, he is Christian as well as a Muslim.[63]

Preachers in the African-Immigrant context are confronted with this challenge. How do they preach the gospel to those who are sitting on the fence or making up their minds about following Christ? Whole preaching should be very decisive. It must replicate principles in the book of Acts, where listeners asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). African-Immigrant preachers have a colossal task to lead the listeners to faith in Christ. Their sermons should obliterate the indecisiveness of those on the fence. The word of God must draw them out of any form of syncretism. This form of confusion appears to be plaguing Africans and African-Immigrants.

In this context, the preacher should be aware of some elements of stages of change (developed by researchers James O. Prochaska et al) as well as some elements of motivational interview developed

62. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 16, 2019.

63. Listener from Sierra Leone, January 11, 2020.

by William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick.[64] The stages of change are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. It appears that some listeners go through these stages. African-Immigrants, for example deal with ambivalence. The preacher must lead his listener through the obstacles they confront as they anticipate change.

Motivational interview is a goal-oriented counseling approach that helps the client seeking change. This approach compliments stages of change though different from stages of change.[65] The preacher should be cognizant of the stages of change and inculcate some element of motivational interview in their sermons.

In adopting some elements of motivational interview, the preacher must ask questions—poignant questions—that can motivate the listener to make decisions. The preacher should also empathize with the listeners' ambivalence, but should design the sermon to evoke and elicit a decision on the part of the listener. In this case, the preacher must be the testimony of the change she proclaims. The goal of preaching is transformation, and the sermon should be decisive about change.

They must first refine these tactics with their biblical and theological knowledge. Although some of these interventions were propounded to address the psychological needs of a different audience, these interventions can be recalibrated to address the stages of change to those ambivalent about their faith journey and their decision to follow Christ.

Question Four (Listeners)

Question Four asks: "When was the first time you listened to a sermon, and what did you remember about the sermon and/or the preacher?" The purpose of this question is to gauge memory—

64. Please see William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* (New York: Guilford Press, 2012).

65. Jacqueline Corcoran, *Motivational Interview: A Workbook for Social Workers* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10-33.

to see if and how the listener retains elements of the sermon. Preaching stirs the memory of the listener. It helps the brain to recall stored information, stimulate the mind and absorb new information. "The human learning process is one of listening, memory and integration. We receive information within the context of previous knowledge and process it through the filter of memory; then we decide what to do."[66]

None of the participants could remember the first sermon they heard. Most of them said that it was a long time ago. However, they remembered the gist of the sermons that impacted them. Two of the participants said that they listen to a lot of sermons, but they can remember the ideas of the messages.

A follow-up question asks: "Do you remember any sermon that you have heard? All the participants said that they remembered. They did not remember the sermon exactly, but they remembered the essence of the sermon and the preacher. However, one of the participants said that she remembered a sermon her pastor preached in 2010, entitled "It is finished."[67] Another participant, reiterated that he was first a listener before he became a preacher and that he will always be a listener. He said that when he listens to sermons, all the various sermons and preachers he has listened to echoed in the sermon. He continued saying that he loves the word and that he would always be a listener.[68]

All the participants acknowledged the plethora of voices they have heard as they listened to a sermon. They can recall sermons from various preachers and can link to the sermon that they are listening to. From their memory banks, they can reconnect sermons with those they have heard in the

66. Richard H. Cox, *Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brain Processes Sermons* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 25.

67. Interview with a listener from Cameroon, January 30, 2020.

68. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

past. Preaching, for them, brings along a community of voices of the past. In this regard, a sermon does not necessarily stand on its own legs but on a chorus of voices. Present voices echoing the sentiment of the past and past voices supporting what is being proclaimed. Whole preaching is integrative because it holds the past and the present in a delicate balance and tension. Preaching is never in isolation. It draws from the past: from history, and from other preachers and their sermons. Whole preaching, therefore, takes the whole gamut of person, places, and purpose into consideration.

Question Five (Listeners)

Question Five asks: "What do you think whole preaching is?" All the participants defined whole preaching as preaching the Bible, and they did not view preaching as anything other than proclaiming the Bible. One of the participants described whole preaching as "sermons that communicate the presence of God."[69]

While most of the listeners emphasized that whole preaching is about preaching the content of scripture, they also want their needs addressed. One of the participants said that she would like to relate to characters in the Bible. When they identify with characters in scripture, then preaching becomes relevant to them. As one participant put it, "they (African-Immigrants) come looking for what is mine—My own blessings."[70] The key term used in sermons and prayers in this setting is "blessings." African-Immigrants are in search of prosperity in America and they are under pressure to succeed. The word "blessings" is also used simultaneously with success. Those who know the pains of poverty are searching for ways to escape from its clutches. Others measure their success by the achievements of their compatriots. Knowing that the land where they came from is mired in poverty, they are searching

69. Interview with a listener from Cameroon, January 30, 2020.

70. Interview with a couple from Nigeria, December 7, 2019.

for ways to deliver their countrymen from the pangs of poverty. The sermon must define ways in which they can address this problem and reach up and receive their blessings.

Preaching to many, is whole preaching when it addresses their problems, plights, and aspirations. Some listeners have flocked to churches that proclaim prosperity gospel. Preachers in this context must understand their listener. They must faithfully proclaim the scripture to address the listeners' needs. Whole preaching must account for the whole person's salvation: spiritual, political, socio-economic, and personal. It is whole preaching when the need of the whole person is addressed in the sermon. In this context, listeners are constantly searching for preachers who pronounce personal prophecies—a proclamation that assures them that they will be successful.

Question Six (Listeners)

Question Six asks, "What do you as a listener look for in preaching and what makes preaching effective?" Most of the participants said that identifying their needs in the sermon makes preaching effective. Two of the participants mentioned that clarity and staying on the subject matter is what they look for in a good sermon.[71] One of the participants revealed that the topic and the way the preacher introduces the sermon, makes the sermon effective. Another mentioned that "when I get an 'Aha!' moment, an eye opener. When something profound is said, I want to know more. When it makes sense or [gives an] answer to a puzzling question that I might have in my head. Or, when I want others to hear it said, I get excited."[72]

In a follow-up interview, one of the listeners mentioned that African-Immigrant preachers must be true to their identity. She mentioned that some preachers that are influenced by African-American preachers tend to copy their mannerisms. In their vocalization, they discard their identity and become

71. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

72. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 22, 2020.

someone else that the listener cannot recognized. One of the younger participants said that "preachers should be themselves and not try to copy someone else."[73]

Listeners in the African-Immigrant context continually vacillate between their African identity, immigrant status and their acquired American status and prestige. (Since the Trump Administration, many have acquired American citizenship and those who have acquired US citizenship view this as success.) They celebrate African events as if they are still living in their mother land. When the tides turn, they realize that they are immigrants in a nation that is not theirs. By the same token, they celebrate the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving holidays as if they are rooted and indigenous to this nation—especially those who have given birth to children in this nation. When the word is preached, they subconsciously require the preacher to be cognizant of their tripartite identities: African, immigrants and Americans.

Question Seven (Listeners)

Question Seven asks: "Who is/are your favorite preacher(s), and what makes their preaching effective?" This question evoked a lot of excitement in the listeners. Most of the listeners mentioned Bishop T.D. Jakes, Joel Osteen and, some of them mentioned their pastor. When asked what makes their preaching effective, they said that these preachers communicate simply to the listener.

One of the participants said, "my pastor is a great preacher. He impacted my life with his preaching." She went on to say that during the funeral service of her father, "he reached to the depth of my emotions and feelings. The sermon went into layers of me that I never understood. It was like peeling an onion reaching into every layer, every fabric of me that never existed. It uncovered another dimension of me. It unmasked my personality and solved my problem."[74]

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73. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, September 20, 2019.

74. Interview with a listener from Cameroon, January 30, 2020.

Their favorites preachers included African-American preachers, Caucasians, and other ethnicities. Listeners in this context appears to have interacted with Christianity on a global scale. They have been influenced by Europeans (including American missionaries, preachers, and evangelists) as well as African-American Christianity. Their lists of favorite preachers are very inclusive, which means that they celebrate the diversity of the Christian faith. The African-Immigrant preacher should adopt elements of Pauline theology: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings" (1Corinthians 9:22-23).

Question Eight (Listeners)

Question Eight asks: "How should a sermon be designed so that you can better understand it?" All the participants echoed, clarity![75] They agreed that the message must be communicated in simple language and within the level of understanding of the congregation.

In the focus group session, one of the participants said that preachers should not be preaching from their manuscript. She went on to say that when manuscripts are used, preachers focus on the sheet of papers before them and cannot connect with the congregation. Most of the listeners want a sermon that comes from the heart of the preacher. They prefer the preacher using the Bible rather than manuscripts.

Another participant mentioned that preachers should exude an enthusiasm for the sermon. He mentioned that sometimes even the preacher's body language defeats the purpose of the sermon. He said that the preacher must demonstrate a strong body posture as he walks to the pulpit to proclaim the word of God.[76]

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75. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

76. Focus group discussion listener from Sierra Leone, November 10, 2019.

In the focus group discussion, one of the participants said that robes that some ministers put on obfuscate their personality. Most of the listeners said that they would like to see the preacher's personality come shining through the sermon. Another mentioned that on some occasions they would like to see the preacher dressed in the same attire as the congregation.[77]

Most of the listeners said that the sermons are too long. Most of the listeners who come to church are either coming from work or they are on their way to work. After the service, some would hurry home or into changing rooms to get ready to go to work. Others would be hurrying home to recuperate from additional shifts that may have been assigned to them. They would like sermons to be brief and precise like their American counterparts. In Africa, most sermons last for an hour. Listeners in this context would like the sermons to be preached in half an hour or less.

Question Nine (Listeners)

Question Nine asks: "What are some of the problems with effective preaching?" Most of the participants mentioned two issues: not focusing on the needs of the congregation, and not preaching what the Bible says.

One of the participants said,

> The preacher must be able to identify the needs of the listener in the sermon. He must deal with the listeners' world such as the spiritual world, emotional world, family environment and financial challenges. Some of the preachers are not fully devoted to the word and their message do not carry much weight because they do not put much into their sermon. Some of the preachers are not prepared. A prepared preacher will prepare the listener to understand the sermon but when the preacher is not prepared, the listeners will not prepare themselves either.[78]

When asked about some of the problems with effective preaching in the African-Immigrant setting, another participant mentioned the following:

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77. Focus group discussion listener from Sierra Leone, November 10, 2019.

78. Interview with a listener from Nigeria, January 30, 2019.

> Not communicating my lingo. Not recognizing the authority of the listener. The preacher must acknowledge that he/she is a sinner saved by grace. The preacher must not be talking as from a high horse and talking to the listener as slaves. The preacher should not be like an outsider but must preach like from within. He must preach from the listeners point of view. The preacher must evoke the presence of the Holy Spirit.[79]

Another participant said that "preachers are not fully devoted to their work. Message does not carry much weight not much input into the sermon. Some of the preachers are not prepared. A prepared preacher will prepare the listener to assimilate the sermon. But when the preacher is not prepared, the listeners will not prepare themselves either."[80]

Some of the participants mentioned that services do not start on time. Most rent spaces that are used by other congregations, and they conduct their service in haste. Most of the time, the sermons are preached in haste because another congregation is waiting to use the facilities. Other times the members do come to church very late. In some festive occasions, the church would start very late because women are preparing food for the congregation. Being constrained by a rental agreement and members coming late to church is a challenge for pastors. These problems and others adversely affect effective preaching.

Question Ten (Listeners)

Question Ten asks: "How should preaching be designed for present and future listeners?" All the participants agreed that the preacher should devote more time to prayer, reading the scripture and listening to the Holy Spirit. Five of the participants said that the preacher does not need to understand them, but if they understand the Bible and pray, they will be able to understand them. The remaining participants said that the preacher must focus on the needs of the listener. Most of the listeners agreed that the preacher must listen to and be guided by the Spirit. All the participants agreed that the

79. Interview with a listener from Cameroon, January 30, 2019.

80. Interview with a listener from Nigeria, January 30, 2019.

preacher must focus on the needs of the listener. One of the participants said, "the preacher needs to understand the audience. He must preach interesting topics which are also related to the Bible verses that will enable the audience to reflect and understand that they are not alone in their situation."[81]

One of the participants said that "sermons should provide energy and insight. Energize and quicken your spirit. Must change your mentality about the world. Must speak to your person. As a spiritual person—sermons must speak to me as a spirit person."[82]

> Preaching is the power base of all that's done within and by the church. Preaching needs to be perceived, understood, practiced, and appreciated for being holy energy, meaning that the power of preaching comes from an energy not defined by word, the volume or range of voice, or the environment in which it is proclaimed. The universal energy directed by the Holy Spirit is hardly debatable. Scientists representing many different disciplines recognize universal energy and, whether properly credited or not, all energy is from God.[83]

Analysis of the Listener

Most of the participants agreed that the scriptures are of paramount importance to preaching. An almost equal number of participants emphasized that preaching must focus on the needs of the listener. Two of the participants said that the preacher does not need to understand them but if the preacher had a grasp of her Bible that would do. Those who supported a listener-oriented sermon mentioned that people come to church because they have problems, and that preaching is ineffective if it does not address the listeners' needs. The research finds an almost even split between scriptural emphasis and listeners' focus.

In follow-up questions they were asked if they could trade places with the preacher, how would they design their sermons. Most of the participants said that they would study the scriptures diligently,

81. Interview with a listener from Ghana, March 13, 2020.

82. Interview with a listener from Nigeria, January 30, 2019.

83. R. H. Cox, *Rewiring Your Preaching,* 80.

pray fervently and listen to the Holy Spirit. Participants who recommended that a sermon deal with listeners' needs, also alluded to scripture, prayer, and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the participants appeared to be indicating that the preacher should embrace the world of scripture and that of the listener. The participants maintained that the effective preacher is a person that is juxtaposed between two worlds: embracing the world of the Bible and that of the listener. The participants also emphasized that the preacher must exercise his task with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is indicative of whole preaching.

Analysis of the Focus Group

The focus group was comprised of ten persons: six men and four women. All the participants were members of the New-Life United African Church. They were between the ages of thirty-eight and sixty-three. Two had master's degrees and one was a graduate student. Five had bachelor's degrees and two had completed secondary school educations. Eight of them were married and two were single. They are all gainfully employed in various fields.

The session was held after service. This put us at a disadvantage because the members were looking forward to going home or to work. However, some of the members continued follow-ups and gave feedbacks on numerous occasions after the session. Eventually, the focus group served as feedback.

The work of the group quickly became a referendum on whole preaching in the African-Immigrant church. The members quickly redirected the conversation and focused specifically on our congregation. In the words of Tip O'Neil "all politics is local."

In discussing the specificity of preaching in the African-Immigrant context, the members stressed brevity, simplicity, and relevance. One of the participants mentioned that "life here in the U.S. is busy. Some people are just coming from working the overnight shift and others are on their way to

their jobs, therefore, the sermon must be short. Since the members are busy and tired the sermon must be to the point."[84] Another participant said that the sermon must not be preached above the people. The language of the sermon must be simple so that everyone can understand.[85]

Most of the members referred to the preaching of Bishop T.D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, and an unnamed preacher as their favorite preachers. T.D. jakes was noted for his relevance, Joel Osteen was noted for his motivational preaching and the other for his prosecutorial approach. One of the participants said that he provides biblical proofs to claims that he makes in his preaching.

On understanding the listener, one of the participants noted that "listeners are marginalized, and that the preacher must be caring, and the sermon must be uplifting. He drew references from the Pauline epistles, that Paul would start his preaching with praising the listener and gradually would bring biblical principles."[86] Another participant said that the sermon must be motivational, and that preaching must be a "clinic for the soul."[87]

The group viewed listener-friendly sermons with much trepidation. One of the participants said that the preacher should speak the truth because the listener will gravitate to correcting wrong behavior. He went on to argue that the preacher must have decorum, decency and respect the people, but he must be candid about the truths of the Bible. Another commented that the preacher must not sugar coat the message because preaching is about helping people. One of the participants said preaching must proclaim the whole truth, that holding on to the other half is a lie and half-truth is a lie. Whole preaching, they agreed is truth telling.

84. Focus group discussion participant, November 10, 2019.

85. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

86. Focus group discussion participant, November 10, 2019.

87. Focus group discussion participant, November 10, 2019.

On areas to pay close attention to, the participants outlined the following issues: sensitivity of the listener, and careful and judicious use of illustrations and analogies. One of the participants suggested a non-confrontational approach—that the preacher should exemplify empathy, caring and speaking to their listeners with respectful tones. Other participants mentioned that the preacher should not "rush the sermon but take his time to explain the sermon so that the listener can completely understand the whole sermon."[88]

One of the participants said that "the pastor must not preach beyond his personality". The message should be delivered so that the listener perceives the message as a call for redemption. She reiterated that the message should not be a 'witch hunt'—that the preacher must understand that he is part of the sermon, and that the sermon must not be a desperate search to find fault with the listener. In support, one of the participants mentioned that the preacher must not use illustrations that are close or indicative of a specific individual's life situation.

On recommendations on how to design sermons in the African-Immigrant context, all the participants said that the preacher must pray effectively and study the Bible diligently. Most of the participants agreed that the sermon must be designed to meet the needs of the listener.

Sample Sermons

I listened to three categories of sermons: sermons from preachers in Africa, sermons from preachers in the diaspora (US, Australia, and the UK), favorite preachers of participants and other preachers.[89] My general evaluation of the sermons was based on the following:

1. Centralization: Search for the central (big) idea of the sermon.

88. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

89. Please see Appendix B for the list and sites of sermons.

2. Introduction: Does the introduction captivate the listener? Does it begin with scripture or the listener's need?
3. Organization: How sermonic materials were organized to fit the whole.
4. Transition: How the content was transitioned without disrupting flow of thoughts.
5. Illustration: Suitability of illustration and does it open a window of understanding.
6. Application: Was the application implicit or explicit? Was it coerced or conjured?
7. Explanation: Was content broken down so that listeners can understand?
8. Communication: Was delivery appropriate to preacher's personality and context?
9. Tension: Did the sermon weigh both sides of the argument?
10. Inspiration: Did it evoke a sense of wonder and a "eureka moment" for the listener?
11. Conclusion: Did the takeaway point affect the listener?
12. Celebration: Does the sermon leave the listener with an emotion of celebration?

Most of the sermons were outline or three points sermons. The preacher informed the listener what they were going to tell them and went through their outlines systematically. This allows the preacher to organize their materials very well and communicate effectively to their listeners. Sermons preached from outlines progressed effectively. The explanation and transitions were seamless, but the sermons appeared to lack tension. These sermons were very didactic in nature and instructional: outlining "dos and don'ts."

The rest of the sermons were narrative, and they created much tension. The preachers were excellent story tellers and were very engaging. These sermons were energetic and celebratory. The preachers personalized the stories and motivated the listeners to do the same. In this case, the preacher did not have to force feed any form of application into the sermon because the listeners already embraced the stories as their own. The stories enabled the preacher to stay on the central idea and created much energy for both preacher and listener. This way, the sermon evokes a sense of wonder.

However, on whole preaching, especially in the African-Immigrant context, I used these three criteria:

1. Whole word—Did the sermon provide a complete biblical perspective to the listener?
2. Whole person—Did the sermon engage the whole personality of the preacher and understand the peculiarity of the listener?
3. Whole context—Did the preacher understand and capture the whole social context of the listener?

The sermons I listened to were informative, inspirational, and motivational. Most of the Africans and African-Immigrant preachers used a lot of scriptures in their sermons and applied them to their listeners. Non-immigrants and favorite preachers of the participants used less scripture but integrated their sermon application into their exegesis. Sermons by Africans and African-Immigrant preachers were doctrinal. Most African-Immigrant preachers tend to be pastor-teachers. Their preaching appears to educate their listener with doctrines of scripture. They preached a lot of evangelistic sermons and emphasized holiness doctrines. They also preached a lot of sermons on demonic warfare. These men and women come from a background where "jujus," works of "marabouts," "fetishes" and other works of darkness are prevalent.

Sermons of the participants' favorite preachers assumed practical themes. Some of the non-African preachers appeared to preach motivational sermons. Most of the sermons by African and Africans in the diaspora appeared to be very doctrinal. They were designed to provide biblical information to the listener. A few of the sermons by immigrants' preachers were "how to" sermons. Some of the themes dealt with how the listener can achieve growth in their Christian lives or how they can accomplish their dreams, etc. The "how to sermons" were very impactful.

Sermons by the participants' favorite preachers were integrative. They knitted together the world of the scripture and that of the listener. Also, they skillfully interwove their exegesis with their

application. By doing this, the listener does not have to wait for the "punch line." Before they realized what the preacher was doing, they had "bitten on the bait" and imbibed the sermon.

This research reveals that the listener is in search of the preaching of the Bible and the African-Immigrant preachers are bent on proclaiming scripture. The listener wants the authoritative word preached with an egalitarian accent: a word that is authoritative but with a proclamation that is engaging and communal (also recognizing the authority of the listener). The listener seeks the trustworthy word to be skillfully interwoven into their present world. They are in search of a preacher who can unite the ancient world of scripture and that of their modern world.

Conclusion

African-Immigrant listeners create a social construct which vacillates between: "African-ness" versus "American-ness;" immigrants versus citizens and exiled versus globalized. They can assume one or the other, or neither. African-Immigrants also vacillate in a spiritual construct: rejected versus redeemed, rescued versus respected, and displaced versus been deployed. The pendulum constantly swings in every extreme and their identity is never static. A spiritual construct indicates a need for homeostasis. This, amongst other things, undergirds the listener's incessant search and their voracious appetite for miracles, prophecies, and visions.

African-Immigrant listeners are in search of connections. As displaced and marginalized people, they want to connect their old world with their new world, their old identities and their new identities and scripture with their realities. They want to connect with events and characters in scripture and embrace the similarities. African-Immigrant preachers have a heightened awareness of the inerrancy of scripture and their listeners are hungry for biblical proclamation. They also want to hear their needs clanging in the voice of the preacher and in the sacred pages of the scripture as the preacher proclaims

this timely gospel. But the tension remains as the preacher clings to his Bible, while the listeners wail about their needs.

In whole gospel, there is never a dichotomy between the sacredness of scripture and the seriousness of the listener's need. Whole preaching must bridge this divide and proclaim a gospel which, from the very beginning, was designed to answer the listener's plea. The listener knows that the Bible is the answer to their needs. However, the Bible cannot be preached effectively until the preacher understands their identity, and addresses and respects their needs—setting their needs as a priority in their preaching. The listener in the African-Immigrant context is searching for connections: connections to scripture, their world, and their needs; and this is the task of whole preaching.

The challenge of preaching is to swing the pendulum between these constructs. When the listener recognizes that the preacher understands their identity, they in turn deploy their attention to the sermon. Scripture is the crossroad to pivot identity. Understanding the listeners' identity is a pathway to knowing their needs. Did not Jesus ask his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)?

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Whole preaching in the African-Immigrant context is an interactive process—a complex relational dynamic of truth, meaning, motivation and transformation between preacher and listener. Of truth (biblical truth) because functional relationships are built on the truth. And truth elicits meaning which motivates and transforms the lives of listener and preacher. This may be a reason why they embark on a journey to understand each other.

The preacher and listener continually assess and evaluate each other so that they can understand the nature of their relationship. The onus, however, is on the preacher because she is the one initiating the relationship. She must convince the listener that she has done her work diligently and that she truly understands how to communicate to them effectively.

The preacher should undertake a deliberate effort to diagnose persons and culture. She should understand the nuances and situation of the listener. The listener on the other hand validates this relationship, when he finds out that the preacher has taken the painstaking work of diagnosing his background. As he listens to the sermon, he deciphers specific ingredients that make him connect to the preacher.

This research brings forth the ingredients that the listeners in the African-Immigrant context describe as the repertoire of preaching. From the interviews with listeners and preachers, sermons from pastors and their favorite preachers, scripture, theology, homiletics, and other interactions, I will attempt to catalogue some of the ingredients that make for effective preaching to the whole person in this setting. I have been enamored with why certain preachers' sermons are received in the African-Immigrant context and I wanted to find out what makes their sermon effective and why listeners are captivated by their preaching. From the observation of the listeners, preachers, and sermons, I will attempt to delineate some of these ingredients.

Elements of Effective Sermons

My goal is to highlight some of the elements that the listener thinks make sermons very effective. It would be a herculean task to create a manual on whole person preaching to the African-Immigrants setting. Such a manual may not serve my purpose because it may not express the sentiment of the listener. A more effective outcome is to outline the ingredients that hold the listeners' interest in listening to sermons. From the listeners' perspective, there are the repertoires of sermon delivery methods that stimulate their interest and stir their imaginations.

In a world bombarded with different voices, listeners are oversaturated with speeches and many forms of communications that they easily discard. There are podcasts, Ted Talks, blogs, and other forms of social media forums. Although inundated with these, they still have a thirst for the spoken word. Listeners are still hungry for spoken word that would deliver relevant and life changing ideas. Sermons that are relevant and life-changing do appeal to the listeners and they constantly crave for these. When they discern certain ingredients from sermons, they do listen to it, submit to the word and invite others to participate in their newfound joy.

Preaching to the whole person in the African-Immigrant context accounts for the authority of scripture, the authority of the preacher and the authority of the listener. For the authority of scripture, Paul writes, "all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). To establish the authority of the preacher, Paul asks the question, and later recounts the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "and how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news'" (Romans 10:15, Isaiah 52:7). For the authority of the listener, one can argue that Paul makes this case when he asks the question, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14). One can also argue that the authority of the listener is wrapped up in the mandate to proclaim the word

precisely and with urgency. Paul writing to Timothy beckons the preacher to be one "who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). It is incumbent on the preacher to relay the word to the listener, but most importantly to understand the listener and their setting. Equally so, scripture mandates that the word be proclaimed to the listener—not merely proclaiming the word, but proclaiming it effectively.

The authority of scripture is the foundation on which the preacher stands. The authority of scripture reveals the character of God. The calling of the preacher affirms her authority. Her skills, creativity and devotion to the task further authenticate her authority. Established in God's mind is the love of his people. He desires that his people be fed with the word that comes from him. In some ways the listener's authority is felt as he imposes his needs, plights, and agony in the over-all scheme of preaching. He is not an after-thought in the ministry of preaching. He is ever present from the call to preach and the actual exercise itself. This triad reveals the character of God, the personality of the preacher and the needs of the listener—each revealing the essence of their nature. Preaching therefore, in this context holds these assumptions in a delicate balance.

Centrality

Centrality is pivotal in any form of communication. When the message is communicated with a single, strong, and convincing idea, listeners are held spellbound to it. They can then process it and relate to the message. The mind stores and processes myriads of thoughts and ideas that sometimes tend to discombobulate the listener. The preacher's strategy is to put the mind at ease and organize these ideas. Doing this will calm the listener and settle him down to be a participant in the process. If successful, both preacher and listener will be able to ride on the same wavelength. When the mind is relaxed it can then take up a single idea, analyze it, process it further and participate with the preacher in the preaching event.

There is an interesting dynamic that takes place with preacher and listener. Every inspired word and constructive thought will stimulate neurons in the brain. This stimulation puts the listener in a state of readiness to receive the message. The spoken word ignites reflection, and sets an harmonious atmosphere for preacher and listener. Most importantly, the single idea of the sermon creates a trajectory for the listener to follow through so that he is not easily derailed during the delivery. With the mind at ease, he will be motivated and stay engaged throughout the sermon.

In this research I have argued that a complex dynamic exists between the preacher and the listener. It is a marriage of the meeting of the minds and the exchange of ideas. A word spoken or an idea expressed can stimulate both preacher and listener to conjure new thoughts. On the part of the preacher, he develops what I would describe as a move—he continually picks up those thoughts and ideas and expands on them, and even explores new thoughts. On the part of the listener, she broadens her understanding by relating those thoughts to every specific situation she deals with and imagines. She reaches deeper into the thoughts of the preacher and expands her knowledge. Through this process their minds are enlightened. In this symbiotic relationship, the listener is ready to travel into any terrain the preacher takes her, and the preacher reaches to greater heights of inspiration. However, this is possible only if the message is grounded on a "big idea."

The sermon's big idea unites the content of the message. Just like the body would reject implanted organs within, the listener in the same manner may dismiss a sermon lacking a unifying and cohesive theme. If some parts of the sermon appear to be forced into the overall scheme, they dislodge the listener and confuse them. Some of the participants in this study have complained that sometimes, they do not know what the sermon is about. They have gone on to say that they sometimes sit through the sermon wandering into space and praying for the sermon to end. In the focus group discussion, the participants suggested that the message should be short and to the point. They said that some

preachers include too many ideas in their sermons but if the sermon is short, they will stay with the preacher throughout the sermon.[1]

Lowry and Robinson credited Grady Davis with the work on the centrality of the sermon. "A well-prepared sermon is the embodiment, the development, the full statement of a significant thought."[2] This idea is "generative:" it is founded on a single thought that branches out but remains true to the original idea. This idea should expand and build on itself. If not, it would ricochet off its target and become aimless, stale, and uninspiring to the listener.

The big idea of a sermon takes the listener on an interesting journey. They know that there are more treasures to be discovered at the bottom of the well. Every inspiring thought which springs out of the central idea motivates them to follow the preacher on this odyssey. This is one of the reasons why many listeners are elated and, consume every word from their favorite preachers because they are certain that the idea in the sermon will be generative. Most of the participants said that they like to listen to Bishop T.D. Jakes because his sermon builds from a single idea and rises to a crescendo.

As some listeners convey, the centrality of ideas also means the centrality of scripture. While most listeners advocate for a big idea sermon, they prefer a sermon in which the scripture is central. They sometimes prefer less scripture that pivots to their needs than a lot of scripture that confuses them. Most importantly, they want to understand where they fit into the grand scheme of scripture. They would be satisfied if their felt needs and plights were validated in scripture. When scriptural principles are espoused clearly, listeners have enough reasons to be satisfied with the sermon. All the participants stress the centrality of scripture. One of the participants said that it is the Word that gives

1. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

2. Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 20.

life to the sermon.[3] Another participant said, "preach the word from the Bible and nothing would go wrong."[4] Though they like a sermon to have a big idea; they prefer that idea to be rooted in scripture.

Intrinsicality

Slavery, colonialization, and other forms of oppressions are mechanisms that distort African identity. These forms of oppression as well as other factors gave birth to displacement, marginalization, exploitation, poverty, and other malaise. These mechanisms create a notion which catapults them and places them in the substratum of society. Added to this conundrum are the complexities of African spirituality, African traditional religions, and the religious, economic, and social impact of the diaspora. All these create an identity crisis that needs to be unraveled. The social stratum in which Africans and African-Immigrants find themselves gives them a distorted sense of identity. There is a false sense of identity that is imposed or forged on who they truly are. They may assume a convoluted sense of identity just for the sake of survival. This is a means of survival that helps them to adopt an identity in the host nation, which is alien to their character. The character that they first assumed may not be their identity. They do so just to live for today and they must reckon with that identity daily. This situation creates a monumental task for the preacher. In designing and delivering her sermon, she would have to unravel their identity and create a path forward for her listeners. False identity can shackle someone and lead them into an abyss, but true identity liberates and refines.

In whole preaching to the African-Immigrant context, the sermon should appeal to the listener's intrinsic value. "Intrinsic value is a primitive notion that refers to the goodness that a thing [person] has

3. Interview with a listener from Nigeria, October 30, 2019.

4. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 17, 2019.

in and of itself."[5] When the preacher helps the listener define his identity, she inculcates in her repertoire, intrinsicality:

> Intrinsicality refers to an expression of self, volition, self-determination, autonomy, choice and meaning. It is intrinsic values and beliefs about ourselves and our daily lives that are unique to the individual and formed in dynamic interaction between the person and his or her environment context, plans and interpretations of life events. Embedded within all aspects of person/environment interactions. Intrinsicality is a central dimension of the self, is shaped by the environment to the occupations of everyday life.[6]

Preaching is an interpretative task: interpreting scripture, world, listeners, and events. When the preacher lights the torch of scripture and helps the listener understand his identity, he settles down, imbibes the message, and regains the values God places in him. By using scripture appropriately, the preacher will be able to pivot the listeners' identity. The listener must discern where he fits in the sermon. Most importantly, the sermon must seek to establish his identity and correct any false notion of himself. This is fundamental to preaching because this is the steppingstone on which the listener begins to give audience to the preacher. Most importantly, the listener in the context seeks to find out, "Who am I?" When the preacher can accomplish this task, the listener assumes that the preacher is credible. If he is deemed trustworthy the listener connects to the preacher and the sermon. In turn, this establishes a rhythm where the listener sways through the sermon believing and confessing: my intrinsic value is shining through the preacher's voice and message.

When a preacher establishes an intrinsicality that debunks the dehumanized aspect of the listener and frames him as the person God created him to be ("the imago Dei"), then it becomes a "eureka moment." The preacher's respect of a person's culture, history, and identity creates a lasting bond with the listener. She must interpret those symbols found in the listener's history and culture in

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5. Stephen Kershna, *Desert and Virtue: A Theory of Intrinsic Virtue* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 8.

6. Karen Whalley Hammell, "Intrinsicality: Reconsidering Spirituality, Meaning(s) and Mandates" *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 68, no. 3. https//journals.sagepub/doi/abs/10.1177/ 00084170106800307.

light of scripture. Instead, of bashing and brutally condemning listeners' culture and history, and idolizing another's, the preacher must seek to find and interpret their intrinsic value—biblically and theologically. A considerate and sensitive preacher will take them from where they are to the full revelation of God concerning them. By demonstrating respect for person and culture, the listener will resonate with every word that is proclaimed. Listeners will respond by saying "I feel very comfortable with this preacher," because they perceive that the preacher rightly diagnoses their culture and situation.[7]

Luke gave us a revelation in the book of Acts chapter 10 that makes a case for intrinsicality:

> About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, LORD!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven (Acts 10:9-13).

This revelation was concluded when God declared the intrinsic value of Cornelius— "do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15). Before Peter could preach to Cornelius and his household, God by divine revelation schooled him in intrinsicality. After his mind was challenged, he was able to preach a message that was informed by the intrinsic value of his listeners.

Peter's preaching had to be refined with a solid education in intrinsicality before he could proclaim an effective sermon to reach the whole person. This ingredient was necessary for him as a person and as a preacher before he could engage his listener. Luke was so enamored by this event that he writes, "While Peter was still speaking … the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44). Luke narrated this event, knowing that persons and situations were intrinsically woven into the

7. Most of the participants said that they were comfortable with the church and preachers where they presently attend.

revelation Peter received. Furthermore, God validated this message by the pouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household.

Preachers who have discovered the intrinsic value of their listener are very effective in preaching a whole message to them. In helping his listener understand their identity, Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). "You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household" (Ephesians 2:19). "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). Peter also joins in this chorus when he writes, "but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10).

African-Immigrants' entrapped mindsets and dislodged identities need to be interpreted scripturally. Listeners are fascinated by preachers who care about them, their welfare, and their history. These preachers extricate the false and mistaken identities and allow the dignity of their person to shine through the sermon. This is not to say that they compromise the Word, but they illuminate the listeners' identity in the image of God. They take those symbols in their culture and history that were used to shame and humiliate them and carefully reveal their intrinsic value. One of the participants commented, "I think that preachers are doing the best they can when they preach to the African communities. What is most important is acknowledging all the culture and showing our connection to one another both culturally and spiritually."[8] When the listeners realize their value, they respond to the message as those in scripture by saying, "What shall we do? (Acts 1:9)," or by investigating "to see …. if these things [are] true" (Acts 17:11).

Empathy is the cornerstone of intrinsicality. Empathy is that which the whole person yearns for. Listeners gravitate to preachers who exude empathy because this is the basic need of the whole person. In the focus discussion, the participants spent a great deal of time talking about empathy. "In the

8. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, January 29, 2019.

African-Immigrant community, people are marginalized, and they come to church to listen to [an] uplifting message. In preaching to African-Immigrant context, preaching must be a clinic for the souls of marginalized people."[9] "The preacher should exemplify empathy, caring and speaking to their listeners with respectful tones."[10] One of the participants said that his pastor, "reached different layers of me. He reached to the depth of my emotions and feelings. It was like peeling an onion reaching into every layer."[11]

Neuroscientists have informed us that because of empathy, neurotransmitters trigger the release of certain hormones (oxytocin and dopamine) which affect the brain.[12] "Empathy is a gateway to compassion. It's understanding how someone feels and trying to imagine how that might feel for you—it's a mode of relating."[13] Additional studies validate this function of oxytocin.[14] Further, "Empathic mutuality is communicated by unconditional positive regard towards the person in the situation, … and by communicating that the caretaker has enough strength to challenge as well as to affirm each person and each element in the situation as a whole."[15]

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9. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

10. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

11. Interview with a listener from Cameroon, January 30, 2020.

12. "Oxytocin levels have been previously linked to empathy. Some studies have suggested that increasing oxytocin improves cognition empathy and helps with social adaptation." Ana Sandoiu, "Low oxytocin may lead to low empathy, study finds," November 7, 2016, https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/313911#Oxytocin-increase-empathy.

13. Studies have indicated that oxytocin helps a person identify the emotional states of others … the hypothalamic neuropeptide oxytocin directly promotes trust towards others, reciprocity, sacrifice, and generosity. Thus, oxytocin directly involves the strengthening the altruistic behavior that promotes the tendency of helping others. "Oxytocin and Empathy," https://www.chegg.com/learn/psychology/introduction-to-psychology/oxytocin-and-empathy.

14. Lynn Carroll, "The Neuroscience of Empathy and Compassion," September 6, 2016, https://www.thetherapyspace.com- the-neuroscience-of empathy and compassion.

15. Larry Kent Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds: A Psychosystems Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 105.

Matthew writes that "Jesus was moved with compassion" (Matthew 9:36). Empathy facilitates a bonding with the listeners. When listeners sense that the preacher is reaching out with such emotion, they receive both the message and the messenger. A sermon can reach the whole person when it touches their basic emotion of empathy. Listeners gravitate to preachers who understand their plights and exude empathy. Some participants alluded to Bishop T.D. Jakes because they felt that he connects with their plight and struggles, respects them, and understands them.

If one can imagine for a moment that Thomas Jefferson was preaching a sermon, his Declaration of Independence will give us a solid case of intrinsicality. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights."[16] These words reverberate beyond the American imagination and set them and all people to understand their intrinsic value and their sense of duty to self and the world. Every sermon preached, especially in this context, should seek to restore the listener's true sense of identity and establish a sense of their calling and a path to which they can get there.

Ambiguity

The Bible is a record of polarizing forces: good versus evil, light versus darkness, angels versus demons and God versus Satan. Scripture is filled with tension between these forces which culminates in a confrontation. The authors of scripture were deliberate in recording these tensions. For example, in Deuteronomy the writer states, "I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse" (Deuteronomy 11:26). "I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction" (Deuteronomy 30:15). In Numbers 13, the land that flows with milk and honey also has giants residing in the cities. In the New Testament, Jesus juxtaposed the narrow and the broad road (Matthew 7:13-14).

9. US Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

In some sense, the sermon should replicate a biblical tension. By juxtaposing different perspectives, the sermon will pulsate a tension and arouse the curiosity of listeners. Tension creates movement and this makes the listener more inquisitive. This signifies to the listener that the preacher is deliberate in dealing with truth because he is searching for truth. No problem can be understood and solved if it does not account for the whole truth. In the focus group discussion, one of the participants commented: "it is not whole word if the preacher cannot tell the whole truth. He might be holding on to the other half. Half-truth is a lie. Whole word is preaching the truth."[17] The scripture affirms, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set your free" (John 8:32).

The sermon must not deviate from this scheme. Tension, in some measure, is the heartbeat of the sermon. It thumbs life into the sermon. This convinces the listener that the issues being addressed are timely, serious, and person oriented. When a preacher invokes tension into the sermon it brings a sense of fairness and justice into the discussion. This enables the listener to see the small picture as well as the bigger picture. Unlike some sermons which deal with issues haphazardly, this helps the listener have a total grasp of its overall content. The preacher will not be able to solve critical issues if she does not deal with different sides of the argument. A preacher who deals well with ambiguity will have her listeners as allies as they both invoke "the clue to resolution."

The word "ambiguity" (and ambiguous) comes from the Latin *ambiguus*, which was formed by combining "*ambi*" (meaning "both") and "*agere*" ("to drive").[18] The prefix "*ambi*" in the Latin, means having two-sides. It connotes double-meaning, doubts, and obscurity. Ambiguity also means dealing with two sides of a matter. Each side must be dissected so that all vagueness and obscurity are resolved. The tension is created and felt as the preacher drives the truth and the truth of God's word into the sermon.

17. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

18. "Ambiguity," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambiguity.

African-Immigrants are thrust into a life of ambiguity. They are pulled apart by polarizing forces. They appear deracinated from their heritage and feel rejected from the host culture. The promise of the land of milk and honey comes with many giants they are not equipped to confront. The sermon should witness to, and of, these truths. It must confront their realities and all forms of malaise affecting and afflicting them. When the preacher intentionally deals with ambiguity, it keeps the listeners at the edges of their seats anticipating the answers to the problems. They appreciate a preacher who is unafraid to deal with scripture and reality—especially one who can ruffle the waters and trouble the seas. For example, a mathematician methodically deals with a problem, shows the equations, and provides "clues to resolution." A sermon would be deemed trustworthy if it replicates this pattern.

Every effective sermon must deal to the core of the complexities of the listeners' situation. When they understand their plight better, they are on the road to resolution. The preacher must first unravel the sin equation and the human problem before suggesting the solutions. One of the participants commented that they come to church because they have a lot of problems.[19]

There are superficial methods of preaching which just point to the solution without dealing with the nitty-gritty problems of life. The preacher is like a statistician who catalogues data (biblical as well as contemporary matters) and enables the listener to see a vivid picture of what is proclaimed. The preacher is like a surgeon who uses the scalpel of the Word in the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and in the discerning of the thoughts and intent of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). No medical intervention is effective if it does not deal with the core of the problem. "The pastor [preacher] is a listener and interpretative guide. The [preacher's] goal is to help persons find meaning in what goes

19. Interview with a listener, January 29, 2019.

on in their lives that stitch those events and relationships into the central meaning of the Christian story."[20]

The preacher is an educationist who is unafraid to light the candle in the world of ignorance and bring the listener into wisdom. She leads her listener out of the world of darkness into the "marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). She enlightens and liberates their minds, thus bringing transformation. The preacher is indeed a teacher and Paul is so enamored by this when he writes, "so Christ himself gave … teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). One of the participants was so enamored by his former pastor's preaching/teaching and referred to him as "a teacher's teacher and the Billy Graham of Africa." He went on to say that his pastor referred to a teacher as a "pinkie finger"—the smallest/least of all of gifts and callings: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. All these offices constitute the five fingers (Ephesians 4:11) and that it is only the pinkie finger (teacher) that can reach inside the ears of a person. He said that preaching is basically "hearing and listening."[21]

In dealing with ambiguity, the sermon appeals to the cognitive and emotional dimensions of the listener. The listener is an intellectual, as well as, an emotional being. He wants to reason and experience the Word with the preacher. He wants to hear the arguments on every side before making a decision. In his mind, he also wants to argue with the preacher. I am certain that the preacher entertains this dialogue. Through this dynamic, they understand each other better, because the listener digs deeper into the thoughts of the preacher and expands his knowledge. In the same manner, the preacher accentuates his. Many preachers are in haste to present Jesus as the answer without explaining in detail what the problems are. The sermon is meant to answer a question, solve a problem, and unravel a sense of confusion. The gospel is to "experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human

20. Charles V. Gerkin, *Widening the Horizons: Pastoral Responses to a Fragmented Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 107.

21. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, October 29, 2019.

mind can understand" (Philippians 4:7—Living Bible). The preacher should be diligent to show the listener both sides of the coin. He must be willing to ask his listeners, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription … Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Mark 12:16-17).

One of the participants mentioned that one of the preachers he admires preaches like a prosecutor. That he presents his case on every side before seeking resolution. For example, in a court room, witnesses are examined, and cross-examined, and evidence is thoroughly scrutinized. Listeners reported that they respect a preacher who helps them understand every side of the argument.[22] One of the participants said that he remembered a sermon that "ignite[d] his reasoning," when a preacher titled his sermon "the gain of [sin] smoking." He said that the preacher was very meticulous with the sermon and that his argument was very enlightening, by presenting both sides of the argument. [23] Another participant mentioned that "the word of God is offensive, and it is not the pastor's personal message; preaching is communicating God's message."[24]

Narrativity

The Bible is a story that needs to be retold and series of stories in need of retelling. Some of the stories appear simple but take a life of their own as they are narrated. When these stories are recounted many elements spring to life and hold the imagination of the listeners. Stories contain elements of culture and tradition that clang along as they are narrated. Biblical stories teach lessons and morals that have the power to transform the lives of the listeners. When these stories are narrated, they develop rapidly and bring matters of significance to the listener. Narrators and listeners weave themselves into

22. Focus group discussion participant, November 10, 2019.

23. Interview with a participant, October 29, 2019.

24. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

the story, consciously and subconsciously. As narration takes place, they incarnate themselves into the fabric of the story.

The word *narrate* means to tell or retell. The narrator can tell the story from different perspectives and from different orientations. The story can also be narrated through different lenses: from events, from the perspective of a bystander or stranger, or from an alien or foreign perspective. This makes narrative inspiring because it provides multiple ways of telling and understanding a story.

Narrative uses schemes, plots, and employs different movements. It brings to life dialogues, characters, scenes, and events. A narrative uses timing, creates patterns, has its own rhythm, and employs special vocabularies. A narrator carefully uses word-plays to create images that would affect the listener. All these literal and figurative devices bring more significance to the narration:

> Narrative has been used to explain human action, to articulate structures of human consciousness, to depict the identity of agents, to explain strategies of reading, to justify a view of the importance of story-telling, to account for the historical development of traditions, to provide an alternative to scientific epistemologies, and to develop a means of imposing order on what is otherwise chaotic.[25]

Language is central to narrativity. Language encodes culture and tradition. It is the vehicle of expression of any culture or society. Words are not just simple articulation; they contain symbols which bargain and mediate between people. When a language is spoken or written, it is an embodiment of a particular place, culture, and time. The use of language opens a reservoir of meaning and understanding. As a thinker, the preacher will be able to enter the persons' space and world, as she employs narratives and uses the right words. "Language shapes human consciousness and therefore has the power to bring about change in perception, values, or worldviews."[26]

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25. Emmanuel Katongole*, Beyond Universal Reason: The Relation Between Religion and Ethics in the Work of Stanley Hauerwas* (Chicago: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 105.

26. Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 67.

Lowry and Buttrick argued that sermons should be in the narrative form. Long after the gospel was written the voices of the authors keep echoing in scriptural narratives. Narrative makes the scripture relevant. It brings vitality to the sermon and stimulates the interest of the listener. As the preacher tells the story of the Bible, his own story as well as those of listeners tends to collide. Both are searching for ways to align their stories with scripture, each becoming part of the story. They all have stories to share as the greater narrative of scripture becomes part of their identity. Their stories may come in crossroads or in conflict with scripture. In crossroads because their stories are not complete until they are touched by the scriptural narrative. In conflict because everyone's story needs a redemptive element which heals our ailing stories. It is the sweetest story ever told, Hymn writer, Fanny Crosby writes, "tell me the story … write on my heart every word … sweetest that ever was heard."[27]

When preachers inculcate narrative, they echo the sentiment of Lowry that a sermon is a movement and an event in time.[28] Stories educate, inform, and connect people and event. Stories illustrate and enlighten listeners to understand every minute and intricate issue. They bridge chasms that other means of communication have trouble bridging. Stories are effective in teaching morals. Stories help the listener apply life-changing principles.

Jesus used parables so that his listeners could relate to and understand his sermons. The parables drew inferences from things around them, so that the listeners could glean deeper meaning from even mundane things. His parable gave insight to those it was meant for and eluded those who were not supposed to understand deeper principles of the kingdom (Matthew 13:11).

Africans and African-Immigrants use stories and adages in every important event: in weddings ceremonies, funerals, and in settling disputes. They use stories and adages to interpret the context and

27. Fanny J. Crosby, "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" (Public Domain, 1880).

28. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 26.

put matters in perspective. One of the purposes of these stories is to create a long-lasting image in the minds of the listeners. The image created helps the listener remember underlining principles. What one remembers becomes part of one's life. A sermon should help people remember, especially when they are able to retell the narrative. One of the participants said that he adopts the method of preaching Jesus uses. He said that Jesus uses parables and Jewish thoughts and that he has implemented this approach in his preaching. He also mentioned that he uses idioms, adages and expressions that are ubiquitous in his native Nigeria. Using parables, he noted, make sermons easy to communicate.[29]

In a discussion I had with a listener at a community event, she said that she loves to hear the stories in the Bible. She said that some preachers will tell the whole story and others will just tell part of the story leaving her wanting to hear the whole story. This shows how stories are important, when used effectively.

Personality

Preaching to the whole person is an interaction of personalities. When personalities interact, they bond persons together and form a unique relationship. This unique relationship has the propensity to form a community. The sermon coming through the personality of the preacher is catalytic. It affects both preacher and listener in astounding ways: "It is a process, a symbolic transaction."[30] A sermon that is filtered through the personality of the preacher signifies the beginning of a unique relationship. When listeners observe that, they begin to align with the preacher. On the other hand, a sermon that is remote from a preacher's personality may not affect the listeners.

29. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

30. Katherine Miller, *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Context* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), 4.

I would define personality as our human nature, and as our God-given traits. It includes how we respond to self, how we respond to others, and how we respond to external stimuli. It includes what motivates us, and how we develop and maintain patterns of behavior. Michael Ashton defines personality trait as "a typical tendency to behave, think, or feel in some conceptually related ways, across a variety of relevant situations and across some fairly long period of time."[31]

Earlier in our discussion, we established that personality is like a mask. It covers who we are because there are layers to our personalities. Personality is complex. It is affected by various stimuli, and it organizes our behavior on various layers. It is sometimes masked to protect the self, to process our experience, to understand and to relate to our environment. Our persona is the window through which we relate to the world. One can liken personality to the eye, but there are organs undergirding the eye. To deal with personality, the preacher must go beyond superficial layers and unmask the substantive element of persons.

To uncover these masks, the preacher should allow the sermon to penetrate deep within to the essence of his being. External appearances may not express the true nature of a person. The sermon should draw out what motivates a person, his inner fears, and needs. When the listener sees the preacher peeling off the mask, he removes his own covering and allows the word to penetrate deep within him because the word becomes "lamp and a light" (Psalm 119:105).

Preaching deals with the unmasking of personality. It goes beyond layers and reveals the essence of persons. Through his personality, the preacher allows the listener to see beyond the pulpit. This inspires the listener to reach to the source of strength that the preacher is proclaiming. Listeners become very comfortable when the word of God shines through the personality of the preacher. In turn, the listener will allow the word to enter her personality. To preach to the whole person, the veil must be torn so that the sermon reaches to the core of being:

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31. Michael C. Ashton, *Individual Differences and Personality* (New York: Elsevier, 2013), 27.

> Communication cannot be understood except as a dynamic process in which listener and speaker … act reciprocally, the speaker acting to provide direct and indirect sensory stimulation of the listener; the listener acting on the stimulation by taking it in, investing it with meaning by calling up images in the mind, testing those images against present information and feelings and sooner or later acting upon those images.[32]

Personality it is like a mirror. The mirror reveals physical form but may not reveal the substance. The substance is the essence of the person. It is covert—it is the emotional and spiritual dimension of the person. For example, a photographer would say to a person, smile as I take your picture. In this case, the photographer wants to reflect the physical as well as the inner dimension of the person. He does that, so that he can reveal another layer of personality, thus, unifying the whole—physical form and substance. Personality is revealed when several layers are reached. As the sermon cuts across the personality of the preacher, the listener allows the sermon to do the same.

One can argue that the 'mirror of personality' is two-fold: intrapersonal and interpersonal. The intrapersonal deals with encoding the message and the interpersonal deals with decoding the message.[33] The mirror must reflect these two processes. The intrapersonal dynamics should facilitate an interpersonal dialogue. What is happening within the person should be in agreement with what is been communicated. "Interpersonal communication does not simply involve exchange of messages. It essentially involves the creation and exchange of meaning."[34] "Interpersonal communication … is the way humans negotiate meanings, identity and relationships through person-to-person communication."[35] When both are in agreement with each other it will facilitate a movement in the sermon. The inner witness of the preacher would affect the listener and he will be convinced that "deep

32. Frank E.X. Dance and Carl E. Larson, *The Functions of Human Communication: A Theoretical Approach* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Wilson, 1976), 253.

33. Donna R. Vocate, ed., *Interpersonal Communication: Different Voices, Different Minds* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Publishers, 1994), 4-6.

34. Peter Hartley, *Interpersonal Communication* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 24.

35. Leslie A. Baxter and Dawn O. Braithwaite, eds., *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives* (London, UK: Sage Publication, 2008), 4.

is calling unto deep" (Psalm 42:7). One of the participants argues that "the sermon is shaped by the personality of the listener."[36]

In that connection, those who are extroverted remove their masks and express their enthusiasm for the sermon, sometimes with shouts of alleluias or applause. Those who are introverted internalize the message, but their enthusiasm can be seen through expressions in their body languages. All are in congruity with the sermon. One of the listeners recalled by saying, "my pastor peeled layers of my personality like an onion, reaching every layer when preached the word to me."[37] She went on to say how that message helped her through difficult times of her life.

Creativity/Improvisation

The world spins on its axis because of creativity. By divine decree, the world was created (Genesis 1:1). Many inventions and innovations come to life because of creativity. Sadly, many are withered at the pangs of birth and cannot burst forth into life. Many industries and products that the world enjoys and celebrates are the result of someone's creative idea. Creativity is perennial. It is like a gem hidden in seeds of our imagination waiting to be tapped. To tap into imagination, the preacher uses improvisation, which Jared Alcántara defines as "the ability to do a new thing in a way as guided by convention, intuition, and interaction."[38]

Listeners are enamored with the sermon because of the creativity of the preacher. When they observe the methods of improvisation the preacher instills into the sermon, they lean forward, listen attentively to hear his internal longings, and become even more captivated by his imagination. As they

36. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

37. Interview with a listener, January 30, 2020.

38. Jared E. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Garden C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 95.

continue to listen to the sermon, they celebrate his ingenuity and become participants in the preaching event. The preacher's audacity in creativity and improvisation makes them reward the preacher with their undivided attention. They realize that the preacher has doubled his effort and invested heavily just to reach them. In return, they cling to the sermon by going back and tapping from this great source of inspiration–the Bible—and begin to wonder at its grandeur.

Listeners are intrigued by how scrupulously and creatively the preacher uses scripture to bring out meanings they have never thought of. The preacher who digs deeper, uses creative, performative, and improvised methods makes the Bible a living, breathing word to the listener. One of the participants said that he was fascinated by the way his pastor skillfully brings out truths from the Bible that he has never thought of.[39] Many listeners are simply disinterested because of the lack of creativity and improvisation.

In a culture saturated with a plethora of voices all clamoring for their attention, the listeners become easily disinterested. There are voices in social media, electronic media, podcasts, and myriads forms of communication from which the listener has grown weary. The world pants and thirsts with an insatiable need for creativity. Listeners buffeted and bombarded with incessant and mundane communication yearns for creativity to meet their needs, lift their spirits, and take them to new heights. Their famished spirit strives to be introduced anew to ways of perceiving and understanding the spoken word. Listeners cleave to preachers who are unafraid to use improvised and creative methods to proclaim the gospel because as Mark Powell asserts, "preaching is the performance of scripture."[40]

By being creative, the preacher will be able to give a narrative from different perspectives. An African adage states that the hunter tells part of the story, but the hunted can tell the other half. Stories

39. Interview with a pastor from Haiti, October 30, 2019.

40. Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear: Bridging the Gap between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 102.

enable one to see the tree from the forest and the forest from the trees. For example, the sin of David was narrated from the monarch's perspective. The writer states, "at the time when kings went to war" (2 Samuel 11:1). When the prophet Nathan narrated the story, he told it from Uriah's perspective. Even though Uriah's voice was silent in the story, the prophet (preacher) brought it to life by narrating a story of the rich man and the poor man (2 Samuel 12). One can argue that this was not merely a narration but a performance.

However, there are myriad of ways to resonate Uriah in the narrative. By emulating Nathan's strategy, a preacher can resonate the voices of the messengers, Joab, as well as that of Bathsheba in this narrative. One of the participants said that she would like to relate to the characters in the Bible, walk in their shoes and feel as they felt.[41] A narrative with a good plot can help the listener travel back to the scene as well as resurrect the biblical characters in their world. It is a performative act that can make the word relevant to the listener.

There is a cliché that speaks of "thinking outside the box." Other times it is to reinvent the box. Old, stale, and ineffective methods of the past need to be refurbished so that listeners can observe the preacher reinvent new creative methods. The preacher should be creative and put the listener in the story so that he identifies with it. "Effective preaching depends on how good a speaker and listener you are. Preaching involves multiple dialogical partners including God, congregation, the text, the sermon, current events, the setting, the mode, intrusions, surprises, pauses, deletions, additions, and yes the, preacher."[42]

The Christian gospel has not always been disseminated by its clergy and her parachurch professionals. Through the big screen, Hollywood has dramatized the message of the gospel for the

41. Interview with a listener from Sierra Leone, February 22, 2020.

42. Kirk B. Jones, *The Jazz of Preaching: How to Preach with Great Freedom and Joy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 18.

world to understand. Most people encounter the stories of the Exodus, Moses, David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, the Crucifixion and Jesus not through sermons but through movies and television. These stories are stretched out by performative improvisation through the scripts of writers, directors, producers, and actors. They strive to fill in some gaps by reasonably dramatizing dialogues which make sense and appeal to the viewers. In similar fashion, the preacher imaginatively fills in gaps where the scripture is silent and dramatizes the gospel. For example, a preacher telling the audience some of the consequences of the four men who ripped off a roof of a house to bring the paralytic to Jesus in Luke 5:17-26 could improvise. This stories like others provide "wiggle room" for preachers to improvise and use their imagination. The listener would be astounded to learn about the task of removing the roof and some of the consequences. Some of the participants, mentioned this as one of the traits of Bishop T.D. Jakes as he can improvise, fill-in the gaps and dramatize the message for the listener.

In the eighties, Hollywood movies in Africa were overtaken by Bollywood. Presently, Nollywood has surpassed other movie industry in Africa.[43] Missionaries sent to Africa used Christian movies to propagate the gospel. For example, during Lenten season, missionaries would show movies about the crucifixion. This was a powerful tool to help the people understand the gospel. Many of the converts interacted with the gospel through movies. Whether secular or sacred, Africans have always been connected to the movies. Africans and people of African descent all over the world are now consuming moves from Nollywood.[44] In this frame of mind, it makes sense to use performative improvisation to proclaim the gospel to them.

43. Hollywood is the American movie industry. Bollywood is the movie industry in India. "Nollywood is the film industry in Nigeria and is in fact the second largest movie industry globally … producing about 2,500 films in a year. This number surpasses Hollywood." Ayssa Maio, "What is Nollywood and How Did it Become the Second Largest Film Industry?," December 5, 2019, http://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-nollywood/.

44. Nollywood is the movie industry in Nigeria (also includes Ghana and some other African countries) which produces African movies.

Most African-Immigrant churches are Pentecostals. In Pentecostal churches a premium is placed on dramatizing the scriptures. Most Pentecostal churches do not put emphasis on theology. Most of the preachers now adopt performative improvisational methods. 1 Samuel 17 appears to be the anthem of most preachers and in some African-Immigrant churches I visited. The preachers were motivated, animated, and inspired as they dramatized the confrontation between David and Goliath. Even though most congregations have heard this message several times, they become re-energized when the preacher dramatizes this encounter.

Musicality

Music, like language is one of the innate attributes given to man from the dawn of creation. Jubal, was identified as the father of music in Genesis 4:21. Throughout all of civilization, man has continued to develop this God given ability. Music and language are means of communication. Both express thoughts and emotions. While language is more cognitive, music is both cognitive and more affective. Language can thrive on its own without music, but music depends on language to a certain extent. Music can be expressed without language because it can use sounds that can only be interpreted symbolically and emotionally. Language may be restricted by convention, culture, and tradition; music transcends these. Music may be cultural, experiential, traditional and it is brought to life by inspiration. Language may be learnt, but music is intrinsic. "Music can be defined as a language of emotion. It is made up of component parts of tone (timbre) which gives the sound identity, melody (tune), harmony (simultaneous sounding of related pitches), and rhythm or (meter)."[45]

Preaching and music share a symbiotic relationship. In the Patristic Period the text was either read or sung. This indicates the marriage of music and preaching. "The Greek word "*homilia*" occurs

45. James D. Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 249.

once in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:33), where it means companionship or communication."[46] The word also means to have a discourse and to have communion. Music and preaching are similar—both are means of communication. When first used, a homily was an exegesis or commentary on scripture. Preaching has come to mean more than a commentary on scripture. The goal of homiletics or preaching is engagement and communion. The musical roots of homily still lend itself to preaching. What is sung ultimately ends in worship. The goal of preaching or exposition is worship. Music and preaching thus, end in this marriage of worship and as David Currie asserts, "all preaching is worship. All worship is preaching."[47]

Music is built on individual smaller units that ultimately coalesce into wholeness and grandeur. Every single unit provides its own uniqueness. Music is arranged into bars, clefs, octaves, cords, and scales. Each bar is embellished with ascending or descending movements of notes, flats, sharps, slurs, and rests that give timing, melody, and movement. Music like a sermon begins with a composition and builds up into a crescendo. The sermon is an arrangement of minute units that also builds into a grand scale. The preacher like the musician develops her masterpiece methodically by using tonality, timing, and pause to give a desired effect. Her sermon is music in her heart and song in her voice.

Music begins with composition, arrangement, and performance and so does the sermon. It takes a life of its own and develops its own cadence. In every single unit of the sermon, the preacher is embellishing a musical flavor. This is the aural aspect of preaching. The delivery of the sermon should sound appealing, like music to the listener. The preacher should be cognizant of the sound the sermon (music) creates in their ears. The sermon should affect moods and feelings. It should engage the listener in projections and interpretations. Preaching like music is an interpretative act. It gives the listener an

46. E. Foley, *The Homily: A Handbook for Catholic Preaching* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 156.

47. David A. Currie, *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), 4.

array of responses. It should affect the listener cognition as well as emotions. In some Nigerian Christ Apostolic Churches, listeners erupt into a song when the sermon reaches a crescendo. In other churches, their musical response would be applause and shouts of "Amen" and "Alleluia."

The most important tenet of music is listening. The musician like the preacher must listen to himself. Music first begins when the composer listens to himself. Listening does not stop with composition. It is an on-going process. The music will develop through active listening. The musician listens to different nuances within the development and progression of the music. Most importantly, the musician must listen to the audience. He must first anticipate the audience as he prepares and rehearses his sermon. During the performance, he must listen attentively so that he can remain engaged with the audience. In this interaction the audience listens to the musician and vice-versa. Each of them listens for different elements, nuances, and variations. Music brings out the varieties of listeners and reveals what appeals to them. The preacher, like the musician, performs her sermon with a certain element of musicality. During the focus group discussion, one the participants said that she likes when her pastor sings during the delivery of the sermon.[48]

Music stimulates the senses. The sermon and music vacillate from oral to aural: from the cognitive to the affective and response—thinking affects feelings and eventually behavior. When the performance of either music or sermon appeals to both reason and emotion, the audience will erupt in a response which is musical in nature. This response means that a connection has been created; pew and pulpit are now in harmony with the musicality of the word. Preaching is more than the uttering of the word; it is the dramatic and musical vocalization of the truth. If people can sing of what they hear, they learn it better and what they sing becomes part of their development and maturity. For example, in kindergarten, music is used as a pedagogical tool for children's education and intellectual development, and up to adulthood this is embedded in their psyche.

48. Focus group discussion, November 10, 2019.

Music also stimulates remembrance. Music like sermons, should stir us and bring back thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Music will cause us to recall history, geography and landscapes, events, and other fascinating episodes of life. Some of these remembrances are painful but the sermonic music is redemptive and therapeutic. "If we have no memory, we are adrift, because memory is the mooring to which we are tied. Memory of the past interprets the present and charts a course for the future."[49] "The brain will not … occupy itself with unessential information … the brain is far more receptive to accessing the reward to avoid punishment than it is to avoiding punishment to obtain the reward."[50] Scripture calls saints to remembrance: "and you shall remember the whole way that the Lord has led you" (Deuteronomy 8:2); "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Music integrates all aspects of our imagination. It can take us through a journey of a lifetime and span us through different events. Its unique sound can motivate the listener when it touches their inner self and say to them: reason with me; feel with me; hear my life; learn my history; let me teach you; let me transform you and let me heal you. The preacher as the musician extraordinaire can reach every dimension of personhood when she inculcates the musicality of the word. Paul writes, "speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya write,

> The preacher who is particularly skilled at … musical eloquence is usually regarded as adept in his profession … good preaching and singing are almost invariably the minimum conditions of a successful ministry. Both trace their roots back to Africa where music and religion and life itself were all one holistic enterprise. There was no disjunction between the sacred and the secular, and music, whether vocal or instrumental, was an integral aspect of the celebration of life … so

49. Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 1.

50. Richard H. Cox, *Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brain Processes Sermons* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 74.

> that was music initially assumed a major role in the black experience in religion as the West African diaspora sought to adapt to the new form of spiritual intercourse.[51]

In African-Immigrant congregations, the church puts its emphasis on its praise and worship before the minister ascends the pulpit. This is translated into what will happen throughout the sermon. When the minister begins to preach, his sermon continues with the making of music. His ascents, intonation, and style are a continuation of music and worship to the listener. Most African-Immigrant preachers will start their sermon with a new and lengthy session of praise and worship. This is to prepare him and continue a trend of "musical sermonizing." By this I mean, pitching the music into his preaching. This will skillfully employ his listener in refrain as they support and applaud him. One can say that in African-Immigrant churches, the premium is placed on praise and worship. When most African-Immigrants assess a church, they rate praise and worship high on their list. The sermon should be built on the notion of praise and worship, and it must stimulate extended worship. When a sermon fails to arouse worship, they will deem it as not "anointed."[52] An anointed sermon for them inspires worship.

Thomas Hale in his book *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Word and Music* argues that African music owes it origins to the Griots, who were mainly from West Africa. He describes the Griots/Griottes as genealogists, historians, spokespersons, diplomats, teachers, praise singers, and advisers. He writes that the function of their profession is manifested by a "symbiotic relationship of word and music—a common traits of the griots"[53] and "the music of the griot produces is in some ways the external manifestation of a highly complex and synergistic process."[54] One could argue that this rich history

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51. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (London: Duke University Press, 1990), 346-347.

52. Most African-Immigrants interpret "anointed" to mean to be filled by and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

53. Thomas Albert Hale, *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Word and Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 14.

54. Hale, *Griots and Griottes,* 59.

forms and informs Africans and African-Immigrants' musicality and their preaching conjures up the person and pedigree of the griots.

Celebration

The word celebration come from the Latin "Celebrare." It means to assemble to honor. It also means gathering.[55] It is originally from the Mass …, which means to perform publicly, to keep solemn, to publish.[56] Celebration indicates festivities, recognizing and accentuating of a special event or person.

Scripture is replete with celebrations: Passover (Leviticus 23:4-8); the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:60); First Fruits (Leviticus 23:10); Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Leviticus 23:16); Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24); Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16, 23: 26-32) and Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Leviticus 23:34).[57] Other celebrations and festivities include, Feast of Purim; Sabbath and Holy Days (Leviticus 23:3), the Sabbatical Year (Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:1-7) and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8). These celebrations were a reminder of the God's covenant with his people and the liberation he wrought. Those who have been redeemed, the Psalmist says, "tell their story" (Psalm 107:2 NIV) "say so" (Psalm 107:2, KJV). By recalling their history, they see the mighty hand of deliverance of God who carried them on eagle wings and brought them to himself (Exodus 19:4).

Christianity was born in celebration. Luke informed his audience that the significant event of Act 2, happened on the "day of Pentecost" (Acts 2:1). The day the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples was very significant because it was the celebration of the Feast of Weeks: "The Jewish Pentecost celebrated the gift of the Torah, so the preaching of the apostles, and especially of Peter, laid the foundations for

55. "Celebrare," www.csmonitor.com.

56. "Celebrare," www.etyonline.com.

57. Jessie Blackman and Susha Roberts, "7 Feasts that Point to Christ," https://www.wycliffe.org/feasts/7-feasts-that-point-to-Christ.

the primitive church. Just as Moses had 'come down' from Sinai bearing the Torah, so too Jesus had 'come down' from heaven, sending his spirit. This was clearly yet another adaptation of the ancient celebration."[58]

Henry Mitchell argues that celebration gives birth to a sermon. "In sermon preparation it is often the celebration that is chosen after a text and purpose have been selected."[59] The sermon should also be interspersed with celebration. The preacher should give the listener nuggets of celebration throughout the delivery of the sermon. Every battle the listener faces must be accounted for, and every victory celebrated. Ultimately, the sermon should culminate with a grand celebration—of the work of Christ and the victory he has wrought to believers. One of the participants said that the message is all about Christ and celebrating what he has done for us.[60]

A sermon is a recalling of history. The preacher tells the congregation what happened in history. She methodically leads them through the difficult terrains of the lives of biblical characters. The preacher should also delve into secular histories, especially those pertaining to the individual and their collective struggles. A sermon cannot be preached in a vacuum. For it to be relevant it should relate significantly to those listening to the sermon. The preacher assumes the mantle of an historian as well as contextualizing the message for the listener. A sermon will be celebratory when it deals with the harsh realities of history and points the listener to the solution.

Most of scripture deals with uncomfortable and brutal histories. One of the main tasks of the sermon is to raise questions, answer them and solve problems. Millard Erickson writes, "history is

58. J. Albert Soggin, *Israel in the Biblical Period: Institutions, Festivals, Ceremonies, Rituals* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 109.

59. Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 122.

60. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 14, 2019.

theology's laboratory, in which it can assess the ideas it espouses, or considers espousing."[61] When the listener realizes that the message solves problems, it puts him in a mindset of celebration. Scripture records the problem of man's sin, but it points the way to man's redemption. The preacher should strike the chord of celebration; where the listener can sing, "I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see."[62]

Celebration is built on assessment. As celebrants engage in celebration, it is also an assessment of their journey. As they assess their struggles, failures, and short comings, they are cognizant of the promise of victory. When a sermon assesses the listeners' history, they are able to acquire a new perspective of the course of their journey. They can carve a path forward and build hope for the future. One of the participants said that as immigrants, life is very difficult and that they come to church to hear an uplifting message.[63]

Celebration fosters healing. History is replete with atrocities. There are self-injuries that persons commit against themselves, and sins that they commit against God, his word, and others. When the preacher approaches the scripture, she must deal with the truth of man's depravity. However, the sermon must not conclude with these atrocities. The preacher must shout on the mountain tops the panacea for sin. She must tell how sin is forgiven; how people are healed. The sermon must herald salvation. Who is it that is saved and will not celebrate? Healed and not rejoice? Delivered and not jubilate?

Most of the participants in this study reiterated that life in the diaspora is difficult. They come to church to hear an uplifting sermon. One of the participants said that the sermon must go beyond

61. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 27.

62. John Newton, "Amazing Grace" (Public Domain, 1779).

63. Interview with a listener, October 9, 2019.

preaching and personal counseling, that people should come to church and hear messages that makes their burden lighter.[64]

Ultimately, celebration is about hope. Life for most immigrants is sustained with an expectation that there are greener pastures on the other side. Living in the diaspora, they have realized that life is ambiguous and difficult, and they wish to hear elements of hope that first motivated them to migrate to the New World. When they listen to sermons, they hope to hear how characters in scripture overcame the difficulties of life.

In searching for hope some turn to prophecy and miracle preachers. Some of these preachers have filled them with hope that things will get better, that they will be wealthy, healthy, and prosperous. With hope, they can celebrate and look past their present struggles. Paul writes, "we boast in the hope of the glory of God … we glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:2-5).

One of the participants said that Africans and African-Immigrants follow the drum and the sound of the drum because they see music and celebration as essential part of their spirituality.[65] In this case, the sermon should be designed as a time of celebration: what God has done for them, what he promises and what he will do for them.

Sanctification

The word sanctification means to be set apart—to make holy. Wayne Gruden defines sanctification "as a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and

64. Interview with a listener, October 9, 2019.

65. Interview with a pastor from Nigeria, December 7, 2019.

like Christ in our actual lives."[66] He argues that sanctification has a definite beginning at regeneration and increases throughout life. Sanctification is the on-going work of salvation. It continues as the believer remains in the word and walks with Christ. Paul writes that we are cleansed by the washing of water through the word (Ephesians 5:26).

The goal of preaching is the regeneration of the sinner and the continued sanctification of the body of Christ. The sermons preached should point to the finished work of Christ. Those who preach and listen to the gospel are within its cleansing and redemptive power. The preacher cannot preach about an experience that is alien to her. The word that she proclaims has the power to sanctify and transform her life and that of the listener.

The preacher must first experience salvation and then continue in the path of sanctification. She must be a witness of God's work of grace in her life. Her life and sermons must exemplify righteousness and holiness as prescribed in word of God. A preacher whose life is sanctified will be used tremendously and become God's mouthpiece, so that her listeners will deem her as trustworthy. Most of the participants argue that the salvation experience is the foundation before anyone can venture into preaching the gospel.

Listeners who continually observe preachers' lives and character find some of them wanting. They complain vehemently of preachers' disregard for holiness and their leading sinful lives. Thus, making the message of no effect.[67] These listeners protest that the message and messenger must be complimentary of each other. The preacher must be saved and live a life worthy of the gospel and their calling. They are aware that a life that is sanctified will be filled with the power and Spirit of God and

66. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 746.

67. Interview with a pastor from Congo, October 30, 2019

that they will be able to proclaim anointed and life changing messages. Participants conveyed that if preachers' lives are pure and filled with the Holy Spirit, their sermons will be effective.

To maintain a life of purity, most of the participants agreed that prayer is essential for preaching. Most of the listeners want their pastors to pray more and listen to the Holy Spirit. Prayer is central in most African-Immigrant churches. Although they are over-worked and tired, they still believe in prayer. In most of their churches, they will organize prayer vigils and over-night prayer services. In some churches, they will have prayer and intercessory services before the start of their worship services. On other occasions, they will have prayer warriors interceding while the word is being preached. They are convinced that their spirituality is maintained by prevailing prayer. One of the participants said that she knows if a preacher has prayed before delivering a sermon.[68]

Listeners observed that some sermons are ineffective because of the lack of prayer on the part of preachers. Some believed that too many preachers have depended on the educational tools they have acquired in their training, and they have lacked in prayer and fasting. Therefore, many of these sermons lack the power to transform the lives of preachers and listeners.

Prayer births preaching, ignites and sustains it. E.M. Bounds writes, "the preacher is made by prayer."[69] The preacher must first speak to God and continue speaking to and for God throughout the sermon. Prayer is the dialect of the preacher. It demonstrates the unique relationship between God and man. The preacher is both the priest and the prophet; her sermon indicates the ongoing and nurturing relationship with the one who sent her to preach. The sermon is a testimony that the preacher has spoken to God before speaking with the people—it is God's word in her mind, God's love in her heart, and a prayer on her lips. Her preaching will convey the assurance of an on-going relationship between the creature and the creator.

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68. Interview with a participant from Congo, October 30, 2019.

69. E.M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1979), 42.

These items that participants have highlighted as essential for effective preaching all fall within the framework of Aristotle's three dimensions of persuasion: ethos, logos, and pathos. Pathos deals with emotion and persons' values; logos with logic, reason, and proof; and ethos deals with credibility, confidence, and trust. In defense of logos, ethos and pathos, John Martin argues that "people listen to sermons with a preference for logos, pathos, or ethos that each listener will have a preference for how the preacher stimulates thoughts, evokes feelings, and relates to the congregation, which reflects the categories of logos, pathos, and ethos. He writes, "logos engages the mind, inviting the listener to the sermon … ethos focuses on relationships … pathos can evoke feelings."[70]

Intrinsicality, centrality and ambiguity may provide elements of logos. Musicality, personality, and creativity/improvisation elicit elements of ethos. Celebration and sanctification indicate characteristic of pathos. However, all these elements overlap and interact in ways that cannot be isolated from each other.

Intrinsicality demonstrates characteristics of the preacher as a thinker and a listener—one who diagnoses the culture and assesses his listeners. Centrality refines the prowess of the preacher as a communicator—one who shares biblical, as well as contemporary ideas. Ambiguity fortifies the role of the preacher as an educator. Musicality depicts the preacher as a listener and worshipper—the sermon is music in his heart and a song in his voice. The element of personality shows the essence of personhood—revealing the essence of being human. The Psalmist writes, "what is mankind that you are mindful of them, and human beings that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:4). Henry Ward Beecher writes, "A preacher is in some degree a reproduction of the truth in personal form."[71] Creativity/improvisation introduce the preacher as a listener and a "creative theologian"—one who devises ways so that the

70. John M. Martin, III, "Preaching for the Listener: Does Vineville Baptist Church in Macon, Georgia Prefer Logos, Pathos, or Ethos in Connecting with Sermons?" (DMin thesis, McAfee School of Theology, Atlanta, GA, 2011), 2-12.

71. Henry Ward Beecher, *Lectures on Preaching* (Cambridge, MA: Welch, Bigelow and Company, 1872), 3.

message will be understood. Celebration shows the role of the preacher as a leader and a healer—as one who leads his people from their history to the present and future and points them to the "great physician." Sanctification shows the preacher as a saint—as one who exemplifies his character through biblical principles and practices.

Diagnosing the Listeners

We have discussed some of the ingredients that listeners say make preaching effective. In this section, we want to highlight some of the issues that preachers should diagnose about the listeners in the African-Immigrant context.

1. Displacement: As displaced people; they are in a constant sense of loss. Many of them struggle mindlessly to maintain cultures and traditions that are dying, but they are also aware that they need these traditions for their survival. They are sandwiched by forces that call them to be loyal to their past and by the realities of life in the diaspora that beckon them to abandon their tradition.
2. Diaspora: a place of identity crisis and hope. To survive in their new environment, they must quickly shed elements of their culture and assume a new identity. In this gruesome process, they may not have time to mourn and lament their loss; neither do they have time to assess and properly orient themselves in the adopted home.
3. Deportations: Immigrants must deal with the sad news of their compatriots that are deported and are in the process of deportation. This constant barrage of sad news has emotional toll on immigrants, especially in homes where a parent was deported, leaving the family in a dire situation. African-Immigrants said that when they travel abroad, their passports and accent are held in contempt. Immigration officers are in haste to deny them entry or threaten them with deportation.

4. Disgraced: Immigrants bear the stigma of slavery, colonialization, political instability, economic malaise, and are disdained because of where they came from.
5. Diseases: Sub-Saharan Africa is riveted by many diseases: HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Tuberculosis, Malaria, Cholera, Yellow Fever, Hypertension, Diabetes, Sickle Cell, just to name a few. These diseases have affected the mortality rate in this region and many of these countries lack the medical infrastructure, technology, and expertise to deal with these diseases. These are some of the defeating news and information they contend with and these harsh realities affect them.
6. Discrimination: Immigrants share the history of tribalism, sectionalism, and fragmentations even within their own enclaves. When they travel abroad, they continually deal with xenophobia and many other forms of discrimination.
7. Distanced: They are left behind in economic developments, technology, scientific partnership, education, employment opportunities, and in the corporate world. Immigrants with advanced degrees settle for menial jobs because they are voiceless and powerless to upend the glass ceiling. They continue to wonder when they will finally have seats at the table with other nations.
8. Demonic: A hallmark of African spirituality is their interpretation of demonic oppression. African-Immigrants have a deep belief in demonic strongholds. They believe that there are unseen power structures that battle against them. They also believe that power structures in this world are influenced by demonic strongholds. Sometimes the belief in demonic stronghold deters them from confronting some issues head on, thus creating a form of escapism.

When Jesus began his preaching ministry, his reference from Isaiah addresses these concerns. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has

sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

For Further Study

This study was limited, and it cannot address every issue in detail. There were some issues that could have been dealt with in detail. However, it is my hope that future studies will take up the following subject matters:

1. Intrapersonal communication: Apparently, most homiletical studies concentrate on the interpersonal communication. Most preacher are trained in how to proclaim the message to the listener. I have yet to see studies that deal exclusively with the tensions that take place within the preacher: how those inner tensions are birthed, nurtured, communicated, exchanged, and understood. There are things that preachers wish to convey but do not because of the disconnect between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. There are intrapersonal dynamics that need to be understood and interpreted for the listener. Communication is said to include both spoken and unspoken elements. The unspoken element is lost in the solitude and tension within the preacher. The sermon will become very effective when it successfully bridges the gap between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.
2. The voice of the preacher: What I wish I could have dealt with is the voice of the preacher. Most of the participants mentioned that the voice of the preacher helps their preaching tremendously. Some preachers command the attention of the listener as soon as they begin to preach. As they listen to the preacher, they are nourished by her voice. What is in the preacher's voice that repels some listeners and attracts others? Further studies need to be

done with preaching as oral and aural event. The preacher will be helped tremendously if she receives voice training as part of her sermon preparation and delivery.

Conclusion

The Bible was intentional in setting a blueprint and an ethic for immigrants and immigrant groups. One would celebrate the fact that the scripture looks at immigrants with favor. The history of Israel was shaped by their nomadic movements and later with interactions with other nations. They, like present day immigrants, were in search of a better place. Being displaced by famine, war, and natural disasters, they were searching for a life of peace, prosperity, and tranquility. Though some of their experiences were bitter and oppressive, they learnt from their experiences and were prescribed with ethics as to how to relate to and deal with immigrants. In the book of Deuteronomy, they were to remember their exile experiences and regard the migrant as a person created in the image of God. "Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: my father was a wandering Aramean" (Deuteronomy 26:5).

Throughout history the world has witnessed the vicious cycle: war, poverty, famine, diseases, and other forms of oppressions. People have moved away from inhumane conditions seeking the "shalom of God"—places where they can find peace. For example, the nineteenth century witnessed European migration to the New World. Europe's economy was in shambles and the promise of better life was alluring in the Americas. Even as I write, we are witnessing the mass migration of Africans to Europe and America because Africa is overwhelmed by poverty, disease, instability, and oppression. Today, most Europeans are not thinking of leaving their shores because their countries are economically viable and stable. Many Europeans have returned to their countries of birth because their economies are on par with the rest of the first world.

Looking at this vicious cycle and the plight of humanity it is a possibility that some nations would one day look outside of themselves and seek refuge in foreign lands. Knowing that human history might repeat itself, scripture beckons all to develop an immigrant ethic: to remember that they were once strangers, or they are likely to become strangers in alien lands. This ethic restores humanity to the fullest, so that each view the other as children of God.

Though this research is geared towards African-Immigrants, the principles suggested are biblically based. In understanding how to preach in this context, one should imbibe cultural and emotional intelligence. When one puts oneself in the place of a stranger, they may develop empathy which is a necessary ingredient for preaching in any context.

The principles suggested are transnational. They are applicable to any context. When the Bible calls on its readers to remember their migratory experiences, it is calling upon them to enter the world and plight of the immigrant. They were not to become bitter or revengeful because of their experiences but to develop ethics for dealing with and interacting with immigrants.

These approaches have global implications because the man of the world is a global citizen. Most importantly, "the world's needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized."[72] Because of technology, he can bring the world to his living space. The world has become an instant village: what affects one area of the world affects the entire world. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world and making every citizen a migrant even in his own place of birth.

The African-Immigrant ethic suggested in the research is a blueprint for preaching to every citizen of the world. While many may not be immigrants, they are likely to share similar characteristics. For example, there are those who are displaced politically, socially, economically, culturally and many who are dispossessed. The approaches suggested in the research are applicable to all those who are

72. Ted Levitt, "The Globalization of Markets" *Harvard Business Review* (May-June1983): 92-102, quoted in Nayan Chanda, *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers and Warriors Shaped Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 251.

marginalized and displaced. These methods consider the whole person: what affects him, what motivates him, what he fears and what he hopes for. The immigrant ethic as proposed by this research, and prescribed by scripture, calls for empathy for displaced people. In scripture, this ethic was first prescribed to the Hebrew people. Today the pendulum has moved to African-Immigrants. No one knows for certain where this shift will happen next, and this ethic will be needed the most.

Preachers are called to announce this ethic as "bowels of mercy" (Colossians 3:12, KJV). Jehu Hanciles writes, "every missionary is a migrant in some sense."[73] G.F. Babour writes, "never think of giving up preaching! The angels around the throne envy your work."[74] Every man of the world is just a wink away of being victim of natural disaster, economic, social or political upheaval. This ethic first given to the Hebrews is meant for the whole person. This ethic will help persons in a shattered and displaced world, especially African-Immigrants. The preacher should reach deep within to preach a message that restores wholeness to every person—to the fulness of God's image in them.

Paul reminded Titus that the promises of God are brought to light through preaching (Titus 1:2). Immigrants are in search for a greater promise and that promise can only be realized when the message is communicated to the whole person. When the whole person actualizes that promise, they in turn will seek and maintain the peace (Jeremiah 29:7) and prosperity in the diaspora.

73. Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 6.

74. G.F. Babour, *The Life of Alexander White* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1923), 307.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for African-Immigrant Preachers

1. When did you become converted?
2. When did you first hear a sermon and what did you remember about the sermon?
3. What did you like about the sermon and how did it change you?
4. When did you preach your first sermon and what do you think of it now?
5. How would you define whole preaching?
6. How do you prepare your sermons, and how do you evaluate them?
7. What do you know about the listener and do you have a theory about the listener?
8. What strategies do you have to study and observe the listener and how do you think your listener evaluates your sermons?
9. Who are your preaching heroes (or favorite preachers) and what do learn from them?
10. What do you observe from your preaching and what are the challenges of preaching in the African-Immigrant context.

Interview Questions for African-Immigrant Listeners

1. Are you a Christian or are you just interested in listening to sermons?
2. If you are a Christian, when did you become involved in the church?
3. If you are a Christian or not, what interests you about listening to preaching?
4. When was the first time you listened to a sermon, and what did you remember about the sermon and/or the preacher?
5. What do you think whole preaching is?
6. What do you as a listener look for in preaching and what makes preaching effective?
7. Who is/are your favorite preachers, and what makes their preaching effective?
8. How should a sermon be designed so that you can better understand it?
9. What are some of the problems with effective preaching?

10. How should preaching be designed for present and future listeners?

African-Immigrant Focus Group Discussion

1. Preaching in the African-Immigrant context.
2. Understanding the listener in the African-Immigrant context.
3. Perspectives on listener-friendly sermons.
4. Mistakes to avoid when to preaching to African-Immigrants.
5. Recommendations on how to design sermons in the African-Immigrant context.

APPENDIX B

SERMON SITES AND SOURCES

1. Https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=sermonson+youtube+by+myles+monroe&qpvt=sermons+on+youtube+by+myles+monroe&FORM=VDRE
2. W.F. Kumuyi Sermons on YouTube—Bing video
3. Rev. Billy Graham Sermons on YouTube—Bing video
4. Bishop T.D. Jakes Sermons on YouTube—Bing video
5. https://www.facebook.com/TEMBoston
6. LIVE Miracle Healing Service with Pastor Benny Hinn! —Bing video
7. https://www.pastorchrisonline.org
8. Pastor Chris Oyakhilome—Sin, Forgiveness and Righteousness—Bing video
9. Audio sermon by Rev. Morlai Buya Kamara, Senior Pastor, First Assembly of God, Church, Ambrose Street, Freetown Sierra Leone.
10. Audio sermon by Rev. James Mansaray, Pastor, Overcomers Christian Assembly, Sydney, Australia.
11. Https://www.joelosteen.com/yourestrong
12. Joel Osteen LIVE | Lakewood Church | Sunday 11am—Bing video
13. BISHOP DAVID OYEDEPO SERMON | RCCG CONGRESS 2020—Bing video
14. Https://www.jhm.org/power
15. Https://www.ligonier.org
16. Https://renewingyourmind.org
17. R.C. Sproul: The End & Purpose of the World—Bing video
18. Cornerstone Church LIVE 8:30am on Sunday August 15th 2021—Bing video
19. Defending Your Field of Dreams | Fast 2021 | Pastor Jentezen Franklin—Bing video
20. Https://jentezenfranklin.org
21. Https://www.facebook.com/FirstAGSL

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